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ANiMATO!

The Animation Fan's Magazine

Celebrate Sixty Years of Popeye Animation

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Special Popeye Coverage
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ANIMATO!

The Animation Fan's Magazine

Spring 1993 Issue 25

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Publisher: Patrick Duquette **Editor**: G. Michael Dobbs

Layout: Gene Gumbs

Proofreading and Mailing Assist: Sheila Boilard and Mary Cassidy

Front Cover Mechanical and Color produced by Ray Dorow II

Founder: Michael Ventrella **Co-founder:** Scott Gillespie

Our Hat's Off to Harry McCracken

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About the Cover

Myron Waldman's *Celebrating Sixty Years* continues our efforts to present original art on the cover of ANIMATO! The image Popeye is projecting is from his first animated appearance with Betty Boop in 1933.

Myron is one of the last surviving animators and directors from the Fleischer Studio. If there had been a "Nine Old Men" group at Fleischer's, as there was at Disney, Myron would have undoubtedly been part of it, but I'm sure he would have never courted such a designation. An individualist who has always spoken his mind, Myron worked primarily on the *Betty Boop* and *Color Classic* series (several of his cartoons, including his characters Hunky and Spunky, were nominated for Academy Awards). He also contributed to both features, the *Superman* series and, naturally, to *Popeye* .

After serving in the Army during WWII, Myron worked at Famous Studios in New York. He did a lot of work for television series produced by Hal Seeger, and was very active in commercials as well.

At age 84, Myron shows no sign of slowing down. Although he retired from animation several years ago, he is very active in creating limited edition cels for Toon Art, and his Popeye cels have proven to be favorites among collectors. He and his lovely wife Rosalie (a cooking instructor who is undoubtedly one of the best chefs on the planet) are very busy attending gallery events all around North America promoting his work. **GMD**

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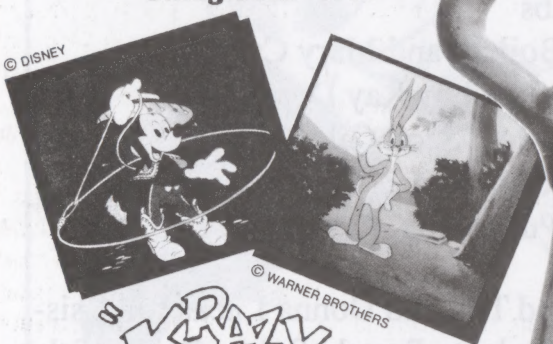

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PUBLISHER-TORIAL

By Patrick Duquette

During the past few months that Mike and I have been promoting our magazine, we have noticed a common response from adults not familiar with ANIMATO! They usually dismiss the magazine with "Nice cover. I'll give it to my kids."

Comic books and animation seem to share a biased opinion from the public at large in that they are generally regarded as fodder for children. I mention comic books here because Don Thompson, editor of the *Comic Buyer's Guide*, refers to the difference between "childish" and "child-like" when appreciating comics. That, my friends, is it in a nutshell.

Should we spend time trying to communicate our love of animation to people who don't understand a child-like appreciation for 'toon magic? Perhaps. People who think animation is childish probably will never think otherwise.

On the other side of the coin, we have upset a few parental units. Jere Guldin, in his excellent Pre-Code animation article, used the words "breast," "crotch," and "panties" to describe a breast, a crotch and Betty Boop's panties. This prompted concerned parents to write and question ANIMATO's suitability for children.

Just for the record, ANIMATO! is for animation fans. Period. No games. No gimmicks. We do have editorial and ethical guidelines. We don't limit writers to a specified article size. We do not have demographic target groups divided by age, gender, color, religion or anything else.

If I had to guess, a "typical" ANIMATO! reader is an animation fan between the ages of nine and 90 who enjoys our rag for what it is. Honest and human. Entertaining and often enlightening.

To concerned parents, I'd like to offer two pearls of wisdom.

First, read to your child at an early age. Often. Explain or define words they don't understand.

Secondly, don't underestimate a child's ability to comprehend abstract or complex ideas.

My wife and I used to read to our children constantly. Our oldest daughter, Joan, would sit for hours and "read" her favorite books aloud. We thought it was cute that a four and a half year-old could memorize every word. One day Joan asked for something new to "read." Grabbing the nearest books, I gave her a tome on antique motorcycles. After a few minutes, she asked me what a "camshaft" was! I was astonished. She could read. *Sesame Street*, *Electric Company*, parents and child all take a bow.

My five year-old nephew, Nick, was visiting one rainy weekend. I suggested we watch a few *Silly Symphony* compilations to pass the time. As a way of introducing the video, I explained that the first two cartoons were rendered in black and white, with the balance of the program in color. One minute into the first cartoon, Nick turned to me with a puzzled look. "I thought you said these cartoons were in black and white!" I blinked at the screen and replied, " They are, Nick! They are!!"

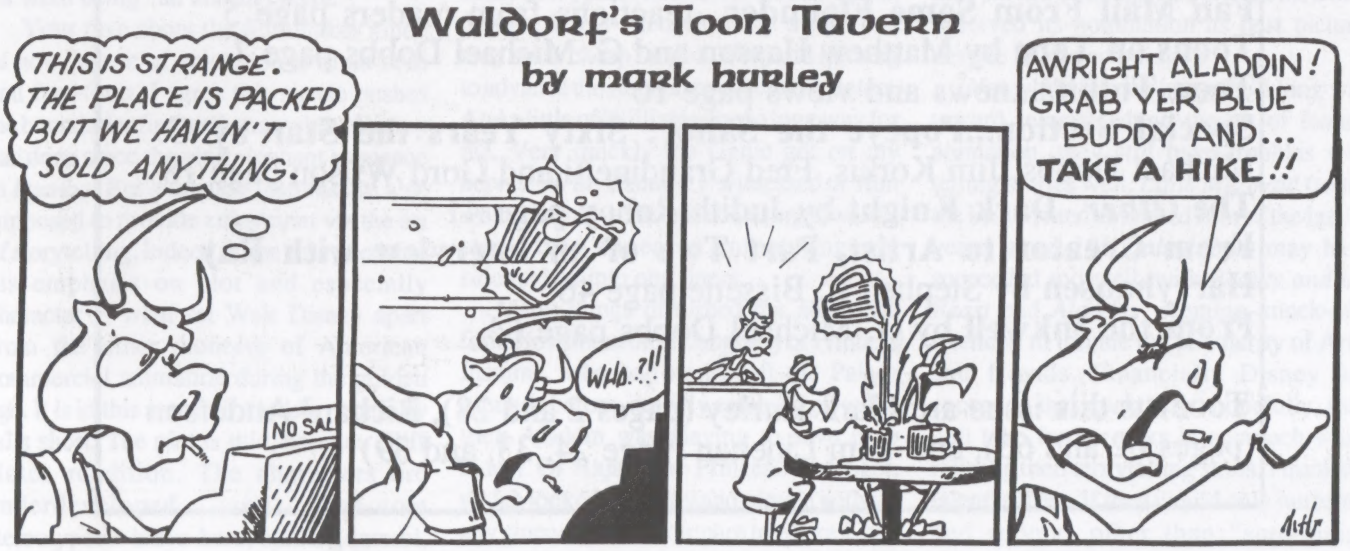
"Well, Uncle Pat, it seems to me the animators have also used various shades of the gray scale, not just black and white."

Hmm. I couldn't help thinking this child has been hanging around toon-heads entirely too much. Yes! Another young convert to the Bright Side of Animation. Muhahahahaha!

What's the point of my rambling? Just this. Don't give ANIMATO! to your child because you think animation is kid stuff. If your child loves animation and finds our magazine interesting, let'em read, let'em read, let'em read! Then write to us. Me and Mike will be right here. — Patrick

Waldorf's Toon Tavern

by mark hurley


THIS IS STRANGE. THE PLACE IS PACKED BUT WE HAVEN'T SOLD ANYTHING.
NO SAL
WHO..?!!
AWRIGHT ALADDIN! GRAB YER BLUE BUDDY AND... TAKE A HIKE!!

ASK ANIMATO!

Real questions demand unreal answers. Names have been changed to protect the innocent.

"What ever happened to the ANIMATO! film Poll?" - B.C. Washington, D.C.

We are in the process of designing a new format for the Animato! Film Poll with nominations for the Animato! Hall of Fame. Stay tooned.

"What have you done with Thelma Scumm?" - M.V., N.Y. , NY

Sounds like a Jim Carroll Band tune. Actually we received a strange missive last week that might have been from Thelma. An envelope with Hunter S. Thompson's return address contained a perfumed piece of paper with lipstick stains and a crushed Tequila worm in the shape of Ren Hoek. The postmark was Bangkok, Thailand. Could it be our lost columnist?

"Why did you change the logo? I liked the old logo." - Ray C., L.A., CA

The new logo was designed by the publisher. We'll pass on your comments.

"Who does your typos? I need an answer. My friend says you do them on purpose to make your magazine a collectible and get more money. Please answer." - Timmy S., French Lick, IN

Curses! Foiled again! While we don't have a full time typo expert, it is true we have a person from "Typo-Temps" add subtle typos to our galley sheets. We think the extra cost is well worth the heckling we receive from William F. Buckley.

Continued on page 60

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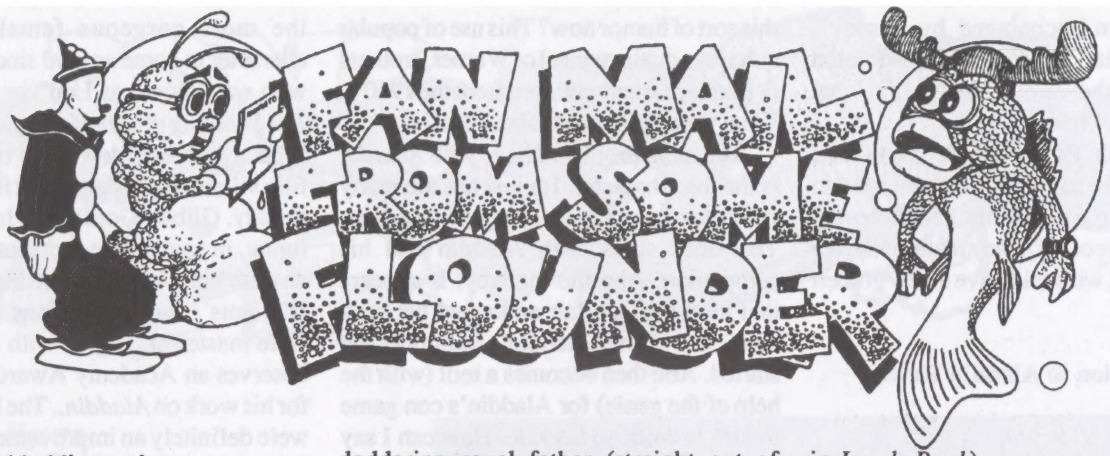

Reaction to *Aladdin* review
Dana Gabbard
Los Angeles, CA

Happily,the new ANIMATO! editorial team has continued the standard of excellence begun by Ventrella and McCracken. No. 24 is stuffed with delights! I was especially pleased to see Ray Harryhausen receive well-deserved recognition.

Thanks for the plug of *Duckburg Times*. Your readers may be interested in our latest issue, no. 24/25. It includes a lengthy index to the first season of *Ducktales*, with full credits, synopsis and commentary. If you can't locate a copy at the neighborhood comic book shop, it is available for $3.00 from: 3010 Wilshire Bl. no. 362, Los Angeles Ca 90010.

"There is no single thing I could...[criticize] about *Aladdin*" is a statement that deserves some sort of response. I think it is a nice little film but far from being "an instant classic".

Your rave about the film makes much of how its use of animation is often bold and free-form. I agree this movie pushes the boundaries further than anything Disney has done since the pink elephant sequence in *Dumbo*. But animated features are also supposed to provide enjoyment via the art of storytelling. Indeed, it can be argued that his emphasis on plot and especially character is what set Walt Disney apart from the other pioneers of American commercial animation during the golden age. It is in this area that *Aladdin* woefully falls short. The plot is thin, barely a Cliff Notes rendition. The characters are underdeveloped and one-note stereotypes—brave hero, spitfire damsel, doddering royal father (straight out of *Sleeping Beauty*, for crying out loud, with perhaps a dash of Belle's dad for added bad measure) and a nasty villain with a comedic sidekick (who is a wisecracking parrot—what an innovation!)

The flat look I think seriously undercuts the characters. When Aladdin is knocked down by the aristocrat and tries to assert his value as a human being, it had no impact on me because his design was so limited there was no way for him to express visually the pain that scene should have revealed. Similarly, Aladdin's struggle later in the film to believe in himself fell flat. Yet when the Beast had grieved, I felt it. When we cannot identify with characters and their plights, the very basis of narrative storytelling has been undercut. All that is left of a cartoon are lines and shapes projected on a screen—sound and fury signifying nothing.

Robin Williams... Sure, I laughed at many of the jokes he told. At the same time, though, I was uncomfortably aware that they were cheap laughs. They did nothing to advance the story or reveal the characters. And a little of Williams goes a long way for me. Very quickly the Genie got on my nerves. With dismay I witnessed a film which initially had been building toward a story that appeared interesting get sidetracked into one liners.

Many things disturbed me about the film. How about the incongruity of Princess Jasmine, who had never left the Palace grounds before, quickly catching on to the trick Aladdin was playing to save their hides? Or Rajah, the Princess' pet tiger, which looked like a toy and moved without any sinewy grace (compare to Shere Khan in *Jungle Book*).

To be fair I should acknowledge some of the nice things about the film. Abu the monkey was a neat bit of design, well used in his limited role (and mercifully silent—no wisecracks!). The computer animated carpet was a treat. Aladdin and Jasmine's duet "A Whole New World" on the flying carpet perfectly captured the soaring sensation of new love. Lastly, the Genie was shown huge and shrouded in shadows after Jafar became his new master—for once there was a sense of menace about the character (quite some feat when you consider, as someone quipped, he looks like a Smurf on steroids).

Overall, I give this one a "B" for effort. Obviously the new generation at Disney is stretching its creative muscles and have shown heartening signs of having higher goals than just recreating the glory days of Snow White, et al. They are making contemporary films, which is just what they should be doing (*Beauty and the Beast* deserved its nomination as best picture, despite its shortcomings).

Yet while Disney has gone a long way toward re-establishing the art of feature animation, they still have troubles with telling stories well. *Little Mermaid* (to me the best written animated film of the last 30 years, since *101 Dalmations*) may have succeeded too well, with *Beauty and the Beast* and *Aladdin* seeming knock-offs intended to imitate the popularity of Ariel and friends. Financially Disney has exceeded that goal. Now, hopefully, they will take further risks in approach while refining their storytelling skills. I think the talent is there, if they would only nurture it and support other than "sure-thing"

projects. I am encouraged by Disney's announced list of upcoming animated features that they are thinking somewhat along the same lines.

I just wish Disney made cartoons I could like more so I didn't feel the need to write carping letters like this. If the potential lurking in the recent Disney features is ever fully realized, we could have a new golden age!

Son of Reaction to Aladdin Review
John Beam
East Lansing, Michigan

This letter is in response to G. Michael Dobbs' review of Disney Pictures latest animated feature *Aladdin*. I hate to take issue with Mr. Dobbs on his feelings of what it takes to make a good motion picture, animated or not. It is not easy to be critical without sounding petty and nit-picky. I have enjoyed reading his articles chronicling the Max Fleischer Studios. He definitely has an expertise as an animation historian and researcher, but he does not appear to have much experience as a film critic.

Reading Mr. Dobbs' review gives me the impression that he somehow believes that *Aladdin* is so perfect that he cannot find fault in it. He goes so far to say that Fantasia is the only other Disney feature that he feels worthy of his time. He says at one point that Disney films have a "typical" look and formula to them, but *Aladdin* is "different" because it looks like it was made by Leon Schlesinger's studio. I felt as I was watching Aladdin that I was watching something directed by Bob Clampett or Robert McKimson. So being typically "Disney" is wrong, but being typically "Warner Brothers" is right?

G. Michael Dobbs enjoys the topical aspects of *Aladdin* with the use of celebrity characterizations and Disney advertisements. While these gags are funny today, they become dated and quaint to audiences in the future. Besides, I have yet to find anyone I know who knew that William F. Buckley had been caricatured in the film. How many of new audiences will know about the references to Jack Nicholson or Arnold Schwarzenegger in twenty years? On the other hand, how many foreign audiences will understand this sort of humor now? This use of popular culture is, again, typical of Warner Brothers or Hanna-Barbera cartoons from the 1960's. What is so "different" about that?

The main problem I have with *Aladdin* is the title character. He just has too many faults for me to have sympathy for him. The story starts with Aladdin and his companion, Abu the monkey. It appears that all things are fair and equal between them, that is until Aladdin's hormones get started. Abu then becomes a tool (with the help of the genie) for Aladdin's con game to lure Jasmine to his side. How can I say this? Abu's very identity is manipulated against his will (he is turned into an elephant), and he is not rewarded or compensated for his trouble at all! I did not expect Aladdin to reject "true love" for companionship with a monkey, but this friendship is tossed to the four-winds.

I also question Aladdin's "morality". Sure, he realizes that he made the wrong choice about not freeing the genie when he had the chance. That is only after he is stripped of his Princedom and finds himself in an Arctic wasteland. No doubt Mr. Dobbs would compare Aladdin's situation with Pinocchio, who also made many wrong choices before he finally redeems himself in the end. He's the one who said that Aladdin had a "moral core". For me there is no similarity between Aladdin and Pinocchio. While Aladdin's motives are purely selfish and ego based, Pinocchio's quest is to become HUMAN. You cannot compare Pinocchio's naivete with Aladdin's wanton disregard for right and wrong.

There is also a minor story flaw in Aladdin that bugs me. The film begins with a character introducing the audience to the story, not unlike using Jiminy Cricket in Pinocchio. But no sooner is this done, then this character is totally forgotten. Nowhere in the story is there a link between the lamp and the little Arab trader. For me, I believe they needed to have the guy retrieving the lamp when the story is over to, at the very least, tie up that loose end.

So, what is my opinion of the film Aladdin? Believe it or not, I very much enjoyed it. Apart from Aladdin himself, I thought that the other characters were very appealing. Princess Jasmine has got to be the most gorgeous female animated character to come around since "The Lady who was known as Lou" in Tex Avery's *The Shooting of Dan McGoo*. I thought that Jafar was, hands down, the best animated film villain since Maleficent from *Sleeping Beauty*. Gilbert Gottfried's Iago was very funny, in spite of the fact that I personally despise him. And I cannot deny that Robin Williams' characterizations for the genie were masterful. I agree with some that he deserves an Academy Award nomination for his work on *Aladdin*.. The backgrounds were definitely an improvement over most Disney films from recent memory, although I still feel they are a bit too sterile. The Computer Graphic Imagery is a positive, ground-breaking innovation.

So where should I leave Mr. Dobbs and his quest for animation that fits the "unDisney-fied" mold? Apart from just about every other American animation studio ever conceived, if he would like to view animation that is less "typical", he might want to concentrate on the National Film Board of Canada (particularly the work of Norman McLaren, Fredric Back and Richard Condie). Another source for different and unusual animation for those who find Disney's too stifling might be Japanimation. Don't laugh. Their stuff might be less than "full", but many of their stories and characters are very appealing. Films like *Project A-Ko* and *Urusei Yatsura* have changed my mind about Japanese animation forever.

Keep trying Mr. Dobbs. I hope you find what you are looking for in what is untypical and different. But please do not celebrate the day Disney Studios became less "perfect" and "realistic". Those qualities in film making have been the standard, not only the trademark of Disney animation for over sixty years. I hope that Disney animation will continue to be that which others try to measure up to.

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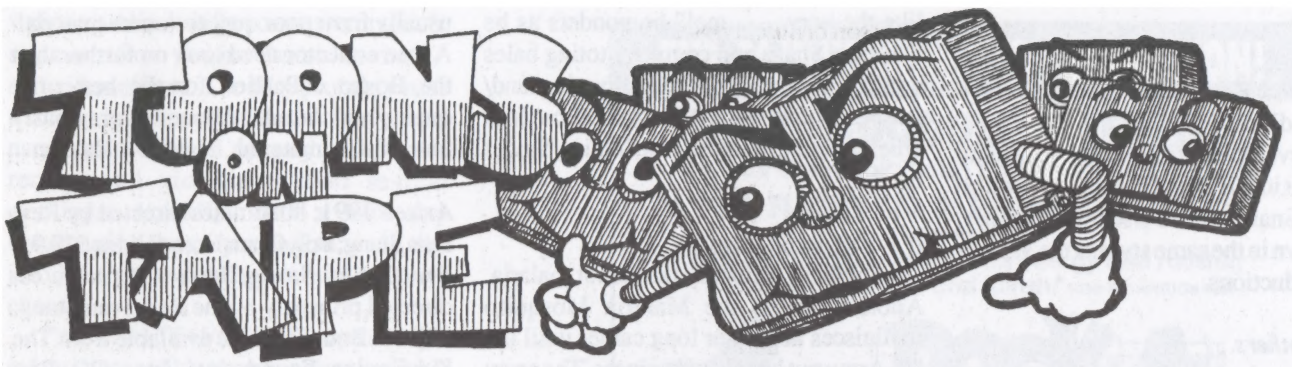


by Matthew Hasson
and G. Michael Dobbs

The Complete, Uncensored Private SNAFU Vol.2, Bosko Video

Here at last is the follow-up collection of Private Snafu shorts from Bosko Video (for a review of Volume 1, see ANIMATO! #21). NOTE: These are not to be confused with a recent SNAFU release from Rhino video, which is just another rehash of previously available material of inferior quality. As with Volume 1, these films are letterboxed and the best available prints are used, most of them from master copies. Not only does this include the remaining films produced by the Warner Bros. studio, but as a bonus it contains 3 ultra-rare SNAFU shorts produced by MGM and the fledgling UPA studios. These non-Warner SNAFU'S have been mentioned in a few books but until now have never been publicly seen, and this release marks their video debut.

Like most recent releases from Bosko Video, the tape opens with a scrolling text detailing the history of Snafu, all the people involved in the production of the films, and information on uncompleted productions (including one begun by Tex Avery). Director's credits are superimposed at the beginning of each film along with original date of releases, which saves a lot of guesswork since the original films never listed credits. One thing I'll say for this company is they are not ashamed to pander to collectors and film buffs, which is what most ANIMATO! readers are.

Some of the more interesting entries on Volume 2 are:

The Snafu cartoons were both educational and provided servicemen with some needed laughs.

Chow Hound
(Frank Tashlin)

Not to be confused with the 1950's Chuck Jones short of the same name, this somewhat morbid tale is about a bull who wants to make a contribution to the war effort. We soon learn that the bull narrating the story is actually a ghost, since the only contribution he can make is volunteering himself to the slaughterhouse to be processed into army rations. The ghost of the bull follows the can of beef all over the world through the various channels of military supply distribution where it eventually winds up on the plate of Private Snafu. Snafu, however, decides to help himself to quadruple portions when no one is looking, and winds up finishing only a small portion of his meal. The rest he tosses in the trash can. The ghost of the bull is so angry at seeing his "contribution" going to waste, he butts Snafu into orbit. (Charlie the Tuna might change his mind if he saw this film).

Payday
(Friz Freleng)

A story done in pantomime follows Snafu around the world as he gambles away his pay at various localities. His guardian angel tries to convince him to save his money by showing him a vision of the future: a postwar house, a postwar wife and a postwar car, which interestingly predicts the design of a 1950 Nash. This advice is wasted however, as Snafu spends his pay on useless souvenirs and then becomes a chronic gambler. Soon there is nothing left of his future but a hole of debt. This film serves as a warning to gullible young soldiers who find themselves stationed in regions where gambling is

allowed.

A Few Quick Facts
(UPA Studio)

The developing style of the UPA studio is apparent in this short economic lesson on inflation. Snafu himself is seen only briefly, but is drawn in the same style as the Warner Bros. productions.

Three Brothers
(Freleng)

Snafu once again is griping about his tedious duty sorting hundreds of pairs of army shoes, so his guardian angel shows him what his brothers are doing in their branch of the service. His brother Tarfu (also in the army...he gets transferred to the Navy later) has a job taking care of carrier pigeons, and he envies his brother Fubar, who trains attack dogs. Little does he know that Fubar trains them by being a human target. Bugs Bunny makes a very brief, non-speaking cameo.

In the Aleutians
(Chuck Jones)

This is more like the Warner Bros. travelog spoofs than a SNAFU short. It shows how soldiers cope with the harsh Alaskan climate. Snafu's appearance is limited to a running gag about rapidly changing temperatures.

A Few Quick Facts on Fear
(UPA Studio)

The print quality on this one is not quite up to par with the rest of the collection, but it's rarity justifies inclusion here. The formative UPA style is easily recognizable with animation kept to a minimum. It shows how the human body reacts to fear and how a soldier can use an adrenalin charge to his advantage under the stress of battle. The motto is "make fear work for you, not against you".

Hot Spot
(Freleng)

The Devil himself becomes curious when he gets word of a place on earth even hotter than hell known as "Iran". So, the Great Satan goes to Iran (where have I heard that before?) to see how soldiers can work in such a climate. "Why, they work like the very.....me!" he ponders as he observes Snafu and company toting bales and lifting crates. They are delivering lend/lease supplies to the Soviet Union (our allies, remember) across the Iranian/Soviet border.

It's Murder She Said

Another cautionary tale about malaria. Another Annie the Malaria Mosquito reminisces about her long career until the US Army put her out of business. The army made it safe for soldiers by spraying DDT, bulldozing wetlands and covering swamps and marshes with oil. Wholesale ecological devastation just to control mosquitoes! (Well, that was back in WWII, you see, and "ecology" then was just a word in the dictionary).

Seaman Snafu
(Harman/Ising/Gordon - MGM Studio)

Snafu introduces his brother Tarfu (an acronym for "Things Are Really F***ed Up") who is in the Navy. Mel Blanc can be heard as Snafu's voice, but Scott Bradley's music gives this away as an MGM production. It consists of spot gags on Navy life and a running gag with a lecherous sailor following a pretty girl across the screen at the end of each scene. When he finally catches up with her, Private Snafu reappears and the girl goes off with him instead. "What did you expect Sailor? The Army made this picture!"

Other titles rounding off the collection are *Censored*, *Target Snafu*, *Outpost*, *No Buddy Atoll* and *Operation Snafu* (previously available on *Inside Termite Terrace vol. 3*, but letterboxed here). So there you have it. All available existing titles of the Private Snafu series from Warner Bros. and other studios on two volumes. Volume 1 is being reissued with new packaging so collectors can have a matched set. There have been other incomplete SNAFU video collections in the past issued by various companies, usually from poor quality source material. A true collector need look no further than the Bosko collection for the best print quality and the added bonus of previously unavailable material. **Matthew Hasson**

Arise - 1991; 80 minutes directed by Rev. Ivan Stang; PolyGram Home Video $19.95. ***Pre-Dobbs Stangfilms***; 120 minutes; directed primarily by the Rev. Ivan Stang; $20.00. Both films are available from The SubGenius Foundation, Inc., PO Box 140306, Dallas, Texas, 75214

"Are we controlled by secret forces ? Are alien space monsters bringing a startling new world? Do people think you're strange? Then, you may be on the right track!" That's a quote from the Sacred Pamphlet of the Church of the SubGenius, a Dallas-based religious group which has been spreading the word of one J.R. "Bob" Dobbs (possibly a relation to this writer, who knows?) since 1979. The Church has an intricate dogma which ties together the end of the world with Yetis, UFOs, the "Fighting Jesus," "Jehovah I, the Space God," a Conspiracy of Normals and the Bleeding Head of Arnold Palmer. Intrigued? Well, *Arise* will probably answer many of your questions about the Church and its elusive founder, "Bob."

The smiling face and the smoking pipe of J.R. "Bob" Dobbs.

Not really pure animation, *Arise* is a hypnotic collage film using clips from

various public domain sources, animation, sequences from various Church "devivals," and video effects. The film probably runs too long for one sitting as the images and narration are rather densely packed. I'd recommend viewing it over several evenings. Actually, after a hard day broadcasting the corporate line at my day job, it's truly refreshing to relax to sheer chaos.

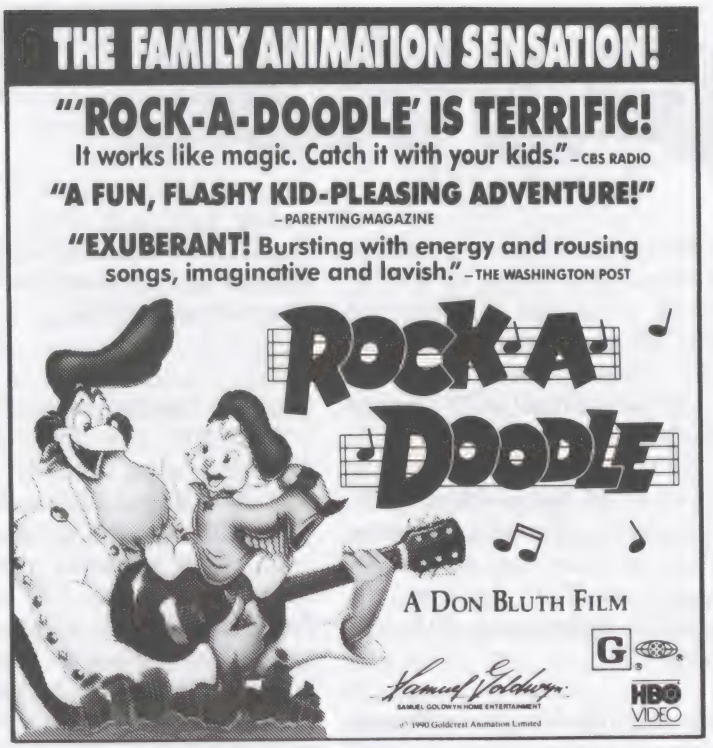
PreDobbs STANGFILMS is probably a tad more accessible to audiences who aren't inclined to change their religion. A collection of animated films which highlight the talent of SubGenius Church guru Rev. Ivan Stang, this tape has the hilariously gross *Reproduction Cycle* and the outstanding "Art Break" video on the Church financed by MTV. **GMD**

Rock-A-Doodle, 1992, HBO Home Video, $24.95

What the hell is this film about? Don Bluth's latest effort continues his artistic tradition of being an ex-Disney employee who apes much of the style of his former studio in his work. If nothing else this is Bluth's version of a Silly Symphony.

There's something of a plot about a bunch of barnyard animals (who all wear clothes) needing the services of their rooster to make the sun rise because if he doesn't make the sun rise the evil giant magical Duke of Owls (who hates the light) will eat everyone. Got that?! The rooster left the farm after being tricked into thinking the sun rose without his crow, and is now in The City starring at a nightclub as a singer known as The King. A group of animals from the farm go to find him, and we discover this is all in a little boy's story book. Only *his* family's farm is facing torrential rains, and the Duke *is* real, and turns the boy into a kitten with a blow of his magical breath, and he joins in on the storybook quest. Huh?!

Disney voice regular Phil Harris does the narration which often seems like an attempt to tie this loose story all-together, and Glen Campbell provides the voice of the Elvis-like rooster. The animation is fluid and colorful, and the characters are all those one-joke type frequently found in the worst Disney movies (i.e there's a magpie who likes to eat, an intelligent mouse who wears glasses named Peepers, etc). Naturally they have some people with expressive voices (Eddie Deezen as the magpie, Sandy Duncan as the mouse, Charles Nelson Reilly as an inept killer owl) to help make up for the one dimensional characterization. Children, I've been told, like the film. Save the children! **GMD**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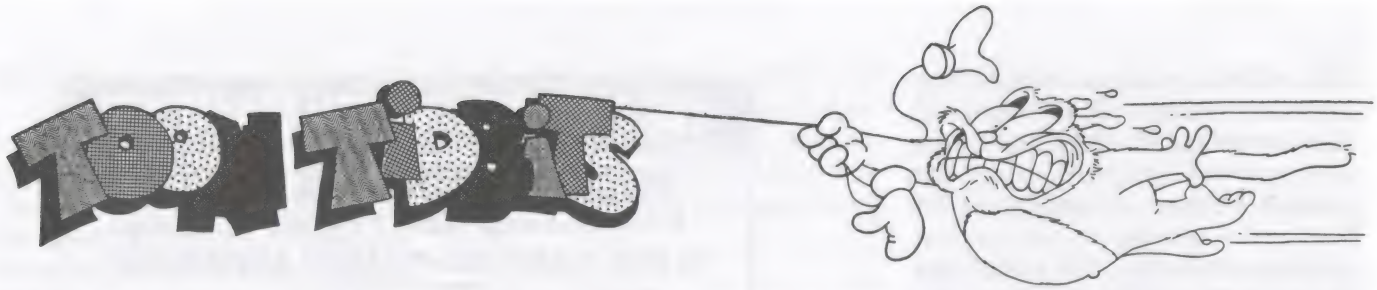


ASIFA-Hollywood to Sponsor AniFest

The annual show staged by ASIFA-Hollywood to benefit its activities promoting the art of animation will take place July 17 from 11 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Beverly Garland Hotel, 4222 Vineland Ave., North Hollywood, CA. There will be shows by top cartoon voice artists, demonstrations of various steps in the animation process, personal appearances by celebrity animators, and much more. Admission is just $5.00. For more info, contact ASIFA-Hollywood at (818) 842-8330. **GMD**

New Animated Television Series Planned

Boardwalk Entertainment and All American/LBS Communications are joining forces to produce a 26 episode syndicated series titled *The Animation Festival*. The half-hour shows will feature a variety of animation techniques from animators from all over the world. **GMD**

Waldman Honored

Veteran animator Myron Waldman was honored with a retrospective of his work at New York's Museum of Modern Art on Feb. 5, 1993. Not only were some of Myron's classic Fleischer Studio works shown (such as *Hawaiian Birds*, *Hunky and Spunky* and *Magnetic Telescope*), but also some of his Famous Studios work and his television and commercial work. The retrospective showed how animators, such as Myron, who were trained in the medium of full theatrical animation, adapted to the demands of television's limited animation. The event was well-attended, and the audience included producer Hal Seeger who produced such Sixties television fare as *Milton the Monster* and *Out of the Inkwell* many of which Myron directed. **GMD**

Myron Waldman

Saturday Morning Reviewed

With NBC now out of the race for Saturday morning supremacy, the burden falls on ABC and CBS to fill the void, while FOX continues to follow along the trail. Several new series were introduced this past fall, both hits and misses. Following are a few of my most popular choices, along with a few bombs:

Already spinning off several consecutive successful series, Disney once again does not fail to disappoint me, creating a series after an award-winning full-length feature movie. The result is *Disney's The Little Mermaid*, an underwater adventure series casting most of the original characters from the box-office smash.

The series centers around, Ariel, daughter of King Triton of Atlantica, and her many adventures before leaving the sea to live with Prince Erik. As expected, Ariel is younger and, of course, even more curious about her world, as well as our own. But what I really like is that our world is not really dwelled upon that much. The series is about life under the sea, and for the most part, it stays there; using our world in nothing more than a satirical sense. A prime example: instead of being grounded like a human girl would be, Ariel was usually "beached".

The stories teach morals like crazy, but express them through original songs and brilliant animation. The original characters like Flounder, Sebastian, etc. have maintained their personalities from the movie, and in many cases, the original voices, too.

Although the series is excellent, and of the high Disney quality one would expect, it does relate more to the female audience, especially the teens. Ariel is as headstrong as she was in the movie, and since she is younger, that results in even more trouble, most of which she asks for herself. She is impossible to control, therefore, and King Triton has my sympathies.

Amblin tried to follow suit; that is, create a series from a movie, and succeeded almost as well. *Fievel's American Tales* begins where *American Tale II* left off, which is a big plus already. The Mousekawitz family are still in Green River, where they belong to a large community of mice. Cat R. Waul, the villainous feline, is still scheming to catch the mice for sale all over the world, but his plots are usually foiled by Fievel and Tiger the cat, played once again with brilliance by Dom DeLuise.

Fievel's American Tales perhaps tries to follow its original movie theme too well. The ideas are usually repetitive: Cat R. Waul or some other evil being tries to catch the mice in some way, and is foiled, thanks to Fievel and Tiger. And I'm puzzled over Cat R. Waul's motives; in one episode, he wants to eat the mice, while in another he wants to sell them to cats around the country. And why doesn't he just let the cats come to Green River?

Also I wish the setting wasn't always in Green River. When I first heard of this cartoon series I was very excited. I had the notion that Fievel would be involved in all kinds of trouble in different parts of the country. Even a short stint back to New York City would be nice. The writers might have thought that, since this takes place around the late 19th century, there was nothing much to see anyway. Oh well.

The series, however, is good, with sound stories and wonderful animation. It occasionally even has stories involving the entire Mousekawitz family, and the community they live in, which help bring around a Western "small-town" atmosphere. Incidentally, Tanya Mousekawitz, voiced by Cathy Cavadini,

STILL has that lovely singing voice, and in one special episode, she is kind enough to again sing a brief piece from "Dreams to Dream", an original song from the movie (and should have at least been considered for an Oscar.)

C.O.W. Boys of Moo Mesa takes the Western setting to an even larger degree, but still scores. In the style of the Code of the West (C.O.W.), there are brave young men...er...bulls dedicated to righting wrongs and instilling justice, in the guise of Marshall Moo Montana, Dakota Dude, and Colorado Kid. Their foes are also typical Wild West sorts: Sheriff Terra Bull and Mayor Buloney. And, yes, there are heroines: the innocent, all-around good-girl Miss Lily, and the brash, yet sensitive Calamity Kate.

The stories are perhaps also typical Western television adventures, but it does not take too much away from the characters and action. Humor abounds throughout the stories, and I love to watch Montana and Miss Lily's exchanges of dialogue, for Miss Lily has had brands on the Marshall for some time now, and she is constantly being ignored.

The only acceptable flaw would be an absence of morals. Children certainly won't learn much from the series, but they can miss out for a half-hour.

A few shows really turned out to be duds this past fall. Here are three reasons why you should change the channel:

The Adventures of Super Dave allows children to indulge themselves if they want to see a lot of human pain. Super Dave Osbourne, the former late-night, humorless stuntman from *Bizarre*, is back - and his animated counterpart proves to be as susceptible to pain as he is. I thought he was hilarious when he starred on his own show *The Super Dave Show*, but this is going way overboard. A nice twist is that he is now portrayed as a super-hero, with disastrous and terribly predictable results. And just a reminder, kids: Don't try these stunts at home; in fact, change the channel altogether.

The last time I remember reading about *Amazing Live Sea Monkeys*, I was reading a Spider man comic book. Now I see it in the TV Guide? It's a "Pee Wee's Playhouse meets Creatures of the Black Lagoon" and it's not even funny. A mad scientist (and he would have to be mad) conjures up these "monkeys", and they are now ready to join the human race. In my opinion, this science experiment failed from the start.

Lastly, *Eek the Cat* can go back to whatever dumpster it crawled from. Good, funny dialogue, but it tries to relay a "Garfield" attitude to the star feline, and he simply cannot follow in the paw prints. I also am not fond that Eek is constantly subject to ridicule, pain, torture, etc. Cat lovers should ban this one. **Paul T. Kraly**

For more television reviews, and a different take on Eek The Cat, keep reading...

Video Releases Slated

The folks at Warner Home Video are working overtime in producing video packages for spring release. Three new double-episode *Tiny Toon Adventures* tapes will be out at a sell-through price of $12.95. The titles are *The Best of Buster and Babs*, *Tiny Toon Music Television* and *Tiny Toons in Two-Tone Town*. Each tape has a running time of 44 to 45 minutes.

Warner Home Video is also releasing two Rankin-Bass productions, *The First Easter Rabbit* (running time 25 minutes) and *The Easter Bunny is Comin' to Town* (running time 50 minutes). Both of these tapes are also at the sell-through price of $12.95.

Warner Home Video is also releasing three new laserdisc collections; *Looney Toons After Dark: Ghoul, Ghost and Goblin Cartoon Classics; Looney Tunes Assorted Nuts: Memorable Supporting Players and Cult Classics*; and *Looney Tunes Curtain Calls" Classic Music and Show Business Cartoons*. Each collection has a suggested retail price of $34.98.

CBS Video celebrates the 15th anniversary of Garfield with the release of two new Emmy-nominated television specials: *Garfield: His Nine Lives*, the first hour-long Garfield special and *Garfield's Feline Fantasies*. These titles will be available for just $12.98 and $9.98 respectively, or together in a commemorative *Cat Pack*, featuring a 15th anniversary logo sticker, specially priced at $19.98

Thumbs down for Eek!

And, CBS/Fox Video will release four new George of the Jungle collections, *The Man for J.U.N.G.L.E., My Jungle 'Tis of Thee, In George We Trust* and *It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad Jungle*. They all retail at $9.98, and each tape has a running time of 34 minutes. **GMD**

Canemaker Wins Award

John Canemaker's titles and animated sequences produced for the PBS television series *The Creative Spirit* won First Prize in Animation Design from ASIFA East, the new York chapter of the international animation association. **GMD**

John Canemaker

Cartoon Network and Fox Kids' Network Reviewed

The past twelve months have certainly been a boon for 'toon watchers. With the rapid growth of the Fox Kids' Network and the birth of Ted Turner's Cartoon Network, there is more animation available on television than ever before.

I must admit to having been a bit disappointed with the early offerings of the Cartoon Network. Much of what's offered, particularly in prime time is classic, but well-worn material, and almost all of it has been available for some time on TNT and TBS. Yes, *The Jetsons*, *The Flintstones* and *Johnny Quest* are milestones in TV animation...But the several times a day, seven day a week rotation schedule may just be too much of a good thing. And I have yet to understand why *Birdman and the Galaxy Trio*, which only had a 13 episode run, merits seven showings a week. (My husband is convinced that there is only one episode, since he has only managed to see one...over and over and over.)

Still, if you are diligent, and are willing to risk being driven to insanity by the Cartoon Network's dreadful station identification segments, there are riches to be found.

The Totally Mental Misadventures of Ed Grimley (Sunday, 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.) was the first of three NBC cartoon series based on SCTV personalities, and it's the only genuinely funny one. If you are one of the very many people who would rather be skinned alive than watch Martin Short's facial and bodily contortions as nerdy Ed, give this this a try anyway. (Finally, an artistic justification for limited animation!)

Most of the episodes are like a free form sitcom centering around Ed and his equally quirky neighbors in an old New York brownstone: his bickering landlords (voiced by Jonathan Winters and Andrea Martin), the flighty actress across the hall (Katherine O'Hara) and her kid brother. Most of the bizarre situations they become embroiled in are the work of Ed's good intentions gone horribly awry. For example, Ed's stint as building superintendent leads him to become lost at sea where he rescues lost aviatrix Hillery Black-Smythe (also voiced by Short, doing a wonderful Katherine Hepburn impression). And that's one of the more straightforward stories!

To further complicate things, there are two virtually unrelated regular segments that occur in the middle of the action. When Ed gets into a serious jam, scientists Emil and Roger Gustave (Short and Winters) appear out of nowhere to explain the scientific principles behind Ed's dilemma, and inevitably wind up talking about something else. Then, at some other crucial moment, no matter where he is or what he's doing, Ed will drop everything to watch his favorite show, "Count Floyd's Scary Stories", in which a live action Joe Flaherty, reprising his reluctant horror host from SCTV, introduces some hilarious animated parodies of bad horror and science fiction films to a studio audience of disinterested moppets.

If strong, logical storylines are essential to your viewing enjoyment, skip this show. But if you're looking for something different — and I mean really different, give Ed Grimley a try.

The Fantastic Four (Saturdays, 3:30 p.m.) episodes on the Cartoon Network are the original 1960 Hanna Barbera cartoons, with the Human Torch (and minus Herbie the Robot), and large doses of heavy handed political correctness. The animation may be a little rough, and the storylines are somewhat simplified from the comic originals, but these have the kind of action and adventure that until recently the current crop of cartoons just haven't had.

Watching these cartoons as an adult, I can see why Sixties parents were appalled; there isn't one episode where The Thing doesn't sock someone in the jaw, and even the level-headed Mr. Fantastic seems little concerned when the evil Dr. Doom steals a defective shuttle craft, which explodes over Manhattan. However, as an adult who centered my life around shows like these during my formative years, I find it worth mentioning that neither I nor my playmates have become homicidal maniacs. Just watch these and enjoy!

Boomerang (Sundays, 10:00 a.m.) has an interesting concept: To show a sampling of cartoons that would have played on an average network Saturday morning during a particular year during the Sixties and Seventies, and run them as they originally aired, except without commercial interruptions.

Well...That's almost what happens. They're a little sloppy in determining what ran during each particular year. (I think it only seems like *Top Cat* ran forever.) And they sometimes fudge a little on their claim to run things as they originally aired. During a recent salute to 1967, they ran *Space Ghost* and *The Herculoids*, both excellent representations of that era...Except that the segments were a mixture of obviously more recent vintage. (Also, if you really want to be picky, I also noticed that *The Herculoids*' opening sequence was missing its narration, "Somewhere out in space live the Herculoids...")

Still, *Boomerang* is a promising package which can at times be a lot of fun. At its best, it's a Saturday morning cartoon buff's dream come true, and even at its worst (and, admittedly, some of the shows devoted to the late Seventies' can be really bad), there may be some obscure show that you missed the first time around.

As the Cartoon Network struggles to reach the masses, the once-floundering Fox Kid's Network has blossomed with the popularity of new shows like *Batman: The Animated Series* and the troubled but very popular *X-Men*, as well as existing shows recently acquired by Fox, such as *Tiny Toon Adventures*, *Beetlejuice* and *Mighty Mouse: The New Adventures*. However, some worthy offerings are not nearly as high profile, and, contrary to the slogan, perhaps "everybody doesn't know they're on Fox."

Tazmania (Saturdays, 10:30 a.m.) makes a star out of one of the most popular supporting players from the Looney Tunes, the Tazmanian Devil.

It goes without saying that it is impossible on a television budget to produce something as lush and detailed as the original Looney Tunes. However, this comes as close as I have ever seen to recapturing the feel of the later Chuck Jones cartoons, using exaggeration and broad movements to make the limited animation seem more, well, animated.

While the opening song of *Tazmania* gives the impression that the stories take place within a single universe, that isn't necessarily true. Some episodes feature Taz as we all remember him: a violent wild animal who is feared by all but those clever enough to discern that he is also hopelessly stupid. Others are set in the Hotel Tazmania, a Down Under Fawlty Towers where Taz is the lovably slow bellhop/janitor.

The best of the episodes, however, are sitcom spoofs featuring Taz's sitcom-

perfect family. Mama Jean is a busy working mother with tons of hobbies who gets everything done while never seeming to do anything. Papa Hugh is a laid back Bing Crosby sound-alike who golfs and has an orange grove in the back yard. Rounding out the family are Taz's younger siblings, Valley girl Molly and sweet baby brother Jake. They are all comparatively normal and all speak perfect English, while understanding Taz's unintelligible growls.

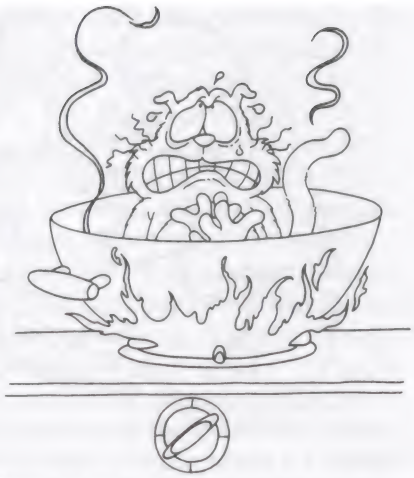
Last season's standout was a spoof of *Gorillas In the Mist*, where a lady anthropologist studies the family's habitat (a cute, ranch-style cave) and sets up camp — complete with camp fire — in their living room. Because Taz is the only one who will approach her (because she feeds him), she decides he is the "smart" one and calls him "Bright Eyes".

Other clever episodes are centered around Hugh's futile attempts to domesticate his oldest son, Taz's comic book habit, and the havoc caused by Molly's demonic pet kitty. This season's episodes haven't been up to the standards set in its yeoman season, due mostly to a self conscious trend of constantly knocking down the legendary "fourth wall", whether or not the story requires it.

However, this season also features appearances by other seldom seen Looney Tunes greats. (I can forgive a show almost anything after a funny guest appearance by Marvin the Martian.) And besides, it's still far closer to the glory days of Warner Brothers than the package run on Nickelodeon.

Eek the Cat (Saturdays, 9:30 a.m.) is easily the funniest show currently on television, animated or otherwise. The title character is a sweet, self-sacrificing cat who belongs to a loving but somewhat neglectful single parent family. While this premise seems perilously close to the sugary cartoons of the mid-Seventies, fear not. Creators Savage Steve Holland and Bill Kopp (who also supplies Eek's perky voice) inject liberal doses of counter culture humor, and the end product is a show that is side splitting funny and touching at the same time.

Eek's life can be summed up with the old saying, "No good deed goes unpunished". He would do anything for



Thumbs up for Eek!

anyone because, as he says,"It never hurts to help". But hurt it usually does, since Eek is the unluckiest creature on earth, sort of a selfless Wile E. Coyote. Every week he gets burned, shredded, electrocuted and squashed...And that's just the opening credits!

Eleanor Donohue of *Father Knows Best* has a field day as the voice of the absent minded mom of Eek's human family. She very rarely has much to do with the stories, but she inevitably steals the show as her character wanders through scenes doing housework while practicing her Berlitz tapes, learning such helpful phrases as "Your Christmas elf is on fire", "Your infant has swallowed my grenade", or "Your ax is swift, stewardess".

Those phrases, cheerfully spoken by an airheaded housewife, are fairly representative of the show's quirky humor, done so disarmingly sweetly that its makers can get away with almost anything. That's why Eek is probably the only Saturday morning cartoon to do a take off on *Cape Fear*. In their version, however, the homicidal maniac is a cute, fuzzy (and tattooed) bunny who plans to kill and rob Eek's family, while framing the hapless cat, who gets trussed up and masked like Hannibal Lecter.

In "Eek vs. the Flying Saucers", Eek must save the world from aliens who are using his 300 pound girlfriend, Annabelle, to power their death ray. After Earth is saved, a subplot involving a doomed NASA mission blossoms into a full scale parody of *Marooned* that's every bit as funny as the *Mystery Science Theater 3000* version. (Apparently, this episode tested the liberal nature of Fox's Standards and Practices Department. According to a former employee of Nelvana, which animates the show, an exchange between Eek and the aliens regarding the planet Uranus was censored.)

While *Eek the Cat* is aimed at the same audience as *Garfield*, I find it much more appealing because the characters, especially poor Eek, are so likeable. He is never portrayed as dumb or cruel. All of his problems are based on a combination of an inability to say no, naive optimism, and just plain bad luck.

Although the writers frequently have fun with Annabelle's girth and Blanche DuBois-like personality, she is also portrayed as loyal and, when she has to be, even brave, and therefore worthy of Eek's starry-eyed devotion. Even Mom and her two offspring, who do neglect Eek, are shown to be more thoughtless than nasty. Boy, this show could be a guilt trip for any pet owners who really thought about it!)

Eek the Cat is my favorite endangered species for the 1992-93 season. It debuted in September opposite ABC's *The Addams Family* and CBS's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* both of which ranked in the Nielsen Top Five for this season. Seemingly consistent with Eek's luck, in November, the show was moved to an even more brutal time slot, opposite Disney's *Darkwing Duck* and the similarly themed *Garfield and Friends*, currently the top rated show on Saturday mornings.

However, it looks like that there may be a happy ending for Eek this season. In December, I received a handwritten note from one of Eek's creators, Savage Steve Holland, informing me that "Luckily the ratings are going up and up..." and "Eek will back with more mayhem next year!"

Whatever other changes may occur next season, that suits me just fine. **Judith Reboy**

So How Much Did Groening Make?

According to a story in *USA Today*, *The Simpsons* made the jump into comic books with a release which sold an estimated

600,000 issues. The 40-page color comic was not produced by a comic book publisher, but rather by the publisher of the current *Simpsons* magazine. Comic book readers who buy their books at comic shops found specially bagged copies which included a poster. No word yet if this is just a one-shot. **GMD**

When They're Gone, They're Gone

The folks at Walt Disney Home Video will pull *The Great Mouse Detective*, *The Rescuers*, and *The Rescuers Down Under* after April 30 from store shelves. The company's policy is to make each release, and re-release a real event. *Pinocchio* is currently for sale, but watch out! That movie will also be pulled after a certain period, and the company is promising it won't be released until after the turn of the century. **GMD**

Recent Shows and Festivals

Animator and cel restoration artist Janet Scagnelli produced a commercial retrospective at the Virgina Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond March 11. Scagnelli, who has worked extensively in the New York animation scene, collected the best work of many greatly talented but underrated animators.

The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston hosted on March 3 and 11 *The Best of Hiroshima: the Fourth Annual Animation Festival* which featured some of the best of the 1992 Hiroshima Animation Festival. **GMD**

Richie, Little Dot, and Wendy

The Harveyville Fun Times is a fanzine devoted to Harvey Comics and their cartoon adaptations. It's an attractively produced publication with an obvious love for its subject material. Sample issues are $2.00. For more information drop a line to Mark Arnold, 1464 La Playa #105, San Francisco, CA 94122. **GMD**

Holy Bat Pasta!

Some of the more interesting merchandising for *Batman: The Animated Series* can be found in an unexpected place: Canadian grocery stores. The Thomas J. Lipton Co. and Heinz of Canada, Ltd. introduced a line of Batman foods with

If you like this guy, there's a magazine for you. © Harvey Comics

gorgeous package art based on the animated characters.

The best of the lot are the fruit snacks, which are available in three varieties: Catwoman, Penguin, and, of course, Joker. Each comes in a box depicting an action scene between the Dark Knight and the featured villain. If these are not done by artists involved with the cartoon, Lipton's ad agency has located artists who've picked up the style nicely.

The fruit snacks themselves are a work of art, carefully detailed and easily recognizable as the various characters and vehicles from the series. Each box also comes with a simple premium of some sort. The first boxes came with a paint card featuring a drawing of either Batman, Catwoman, Penguin or Joker. More recently, this has been changed to a Batman bookmark or door hanger, which can be cut out from the back of the package.

Lipton's Joker and Penguin noodle soups are merely a variation of the company's traditional powdered chicken noodle soup mix, again with a colorful package depicting a fight scene. The noodles in the soups are vaguely shaped like the characters, although one friend of mine observed that the Robin noodles looked more like the Joker than the Joker noodles. (Remember, it's hard to do a good likeness in pasta!)

These are available with the same paint cards as the early boxes of the fruit snacks, which either means that the soup isn't selling quite as well, or they had tons of paint cards left over when they changed promotions. I tend to think the latter is true. After all, "Joker Noodle Soup" has a very negative connotation.

Heinz's Batman pasta is part of a line of kids' pastas that they have been producing for over twenty years, including *Real Ghostbusters*, *Dinogetti*, *Scarios* and the

Mmmmmm, Batman pasta!

ultimate yuppie puppy food, *Envirogetti* (This features pasta in the shape of endangered species...Hmmm, teaching children to eat the whales. Novel marketing concept!)

The Batman version features the same noodles as the Lipton soups in a thick, sweet pasta sauce. Of course, the contents are not nearly as important to most of us as the packaging. It comes in a tin can with a label depicting Batman swinging on a Batrope against a stark Gotham City skyline. The back of the label depicts the noodles contained within, their cartoon counterparts, and a brief description of each character, which like all copy on all Canadian products, is printed in both English and French.

Strangely, the pasta is the only product in the line with television advertising. The commercial, which runs both on Canadian stations and independent U. S. stations along the Canadian border, features Batman's silhouette walking through a doorway, panning to the shadow of his cowl. Suddenly, the ears of the shadow disappear, and the image pans to the right, revealing that it is the shadow of the pasta can. The image fades to a black background with white lettering, "Coming soon to a cupboard near you."

I don't know what the sales are like on these items, but I can report that at the IGA in Fort Erie, Ontario where my husband and I shop on our occasional jaunts across the border, people are stealing the labels off cans of Batman pasta! (Come on, guys! Just spend the 89 cents if you want the label that badly!) **Judith Reboy**

Alaskan Canine Hero New Animated Star

Alaskan reader Jerry Riddle reports that Balto, an Alaskan husky whose heroism saved Nome from a diptheria epidemic in 1925, will be the subject of an animated feature from Universal Pictures to be released in late 1994 or early 1995. *The Anchorage Daily News* reports the dog has been honored with a statue in New York's Central Park, and has been the subject of several books. Thanks, Jerry!

Your press releases, clippings, observations and reviews are welcomed! Send them to ANIMATO! 17 Spruce St., Springfield MA 01105.

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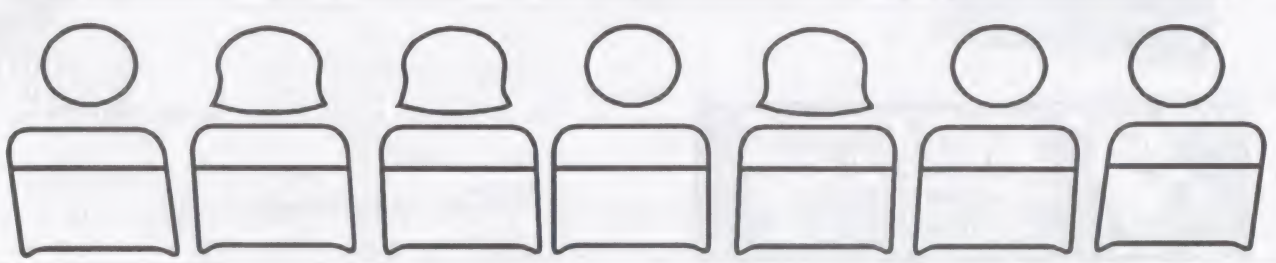

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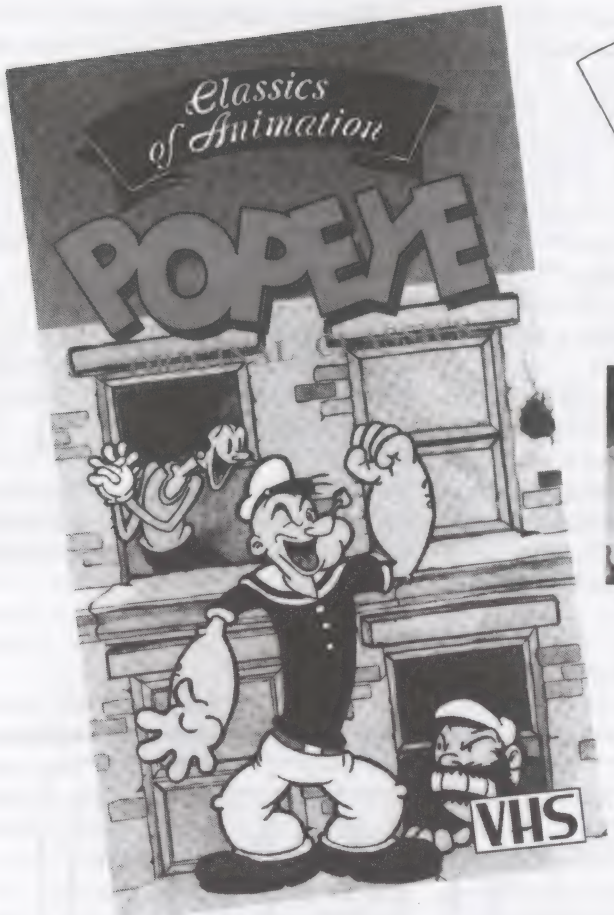
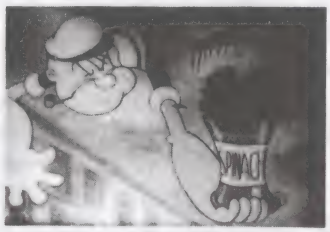


POPEYE

ORIGINAL CLASSICS



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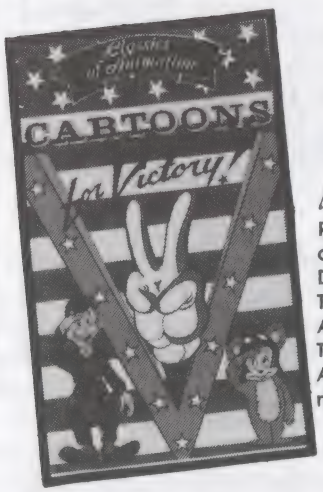

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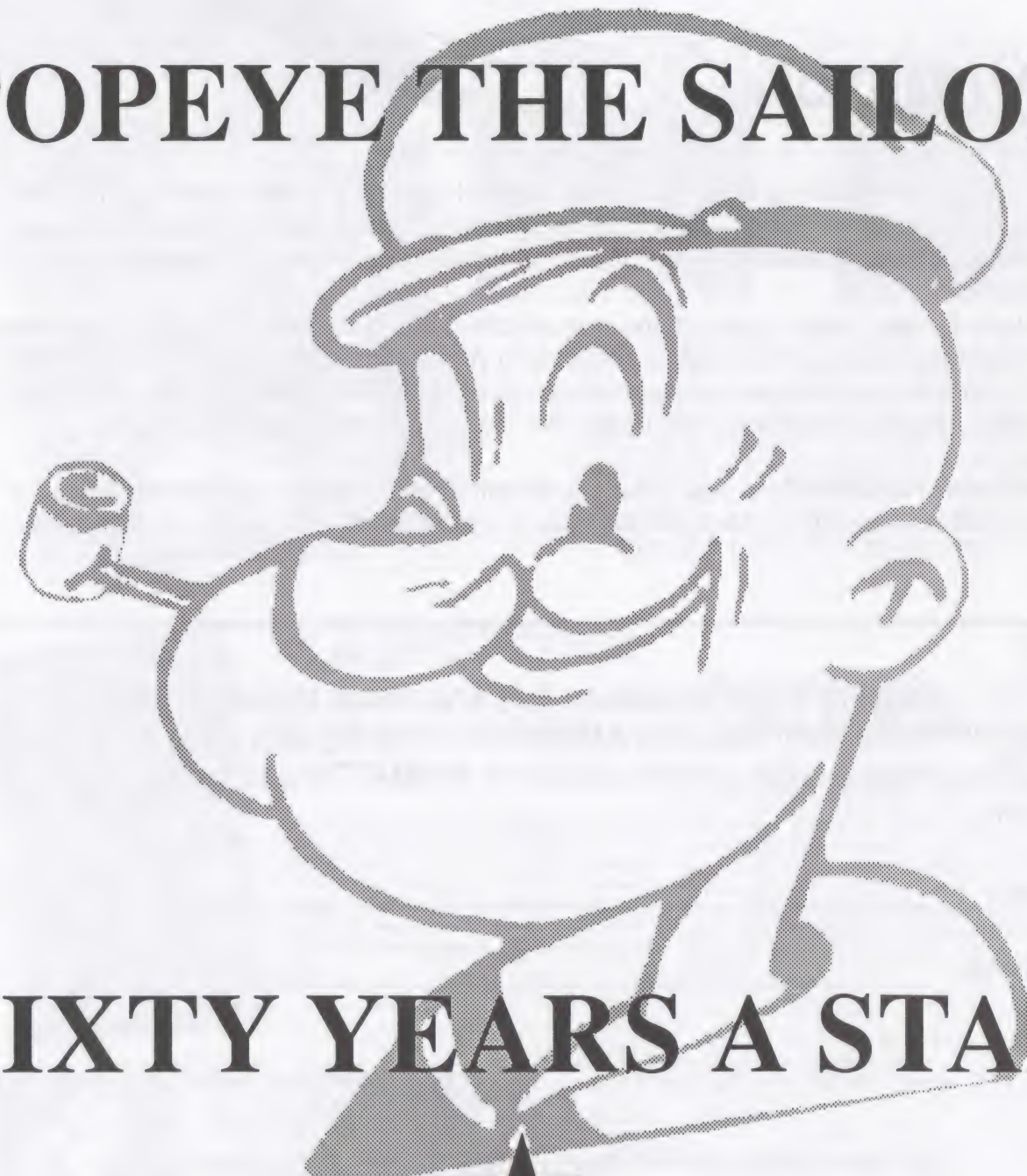
POPEYE THE SAILOR



SIXTY YEARS A STAR

© King Features

The Fleischer Years

by G. Michael Dobbs

Sixty years ago, Max Fleischer debuted his latest cartoon star in a Betty Boop cartoon titled *Popeye The Sailor*. The legendary story is that Max wondered what was making the elevator attendant in his apartment building laugh so much. When he found out the young man was reading *Thimble Theater*, he obtained the rights to the Popeye, despite officials at King Features believing the comic strip sailor was too ugly to be a cartoon star.

Whether that story is true or not, the fact is the short was met with great popular acclaim, and the one-eyed sailor began a unique career. As noted in some of the other articles which follow in this issue, the Popeye cartoons have been continually on movie or television screens, in various incarnations, for sixty years. There is simply not another cartoon character with that kind of longevity.

Naturally, one is compelled to ask why. For many people it's relatively easy to dismiss the Popeye cartoons. Afterall aren't they just the same tired old formula of Popeye and Bluto fighting over Olive? The character doesn't have the elder statesman status of Mickey Mouse and isn't viewed as a hipster as is Bugs Bunny.

Popeye seems to be liked only by the people, and despite too many inferior cartoons, the popularity of Popeye has endured.

I find it's too easy to write about Popeye the Sailor as if this creation of E.C. Segar and the cartoonists who adapted his original work was a real person. Like the best literary characters, and unlike many cartoon characters, Popeye has a real personality. So many cartoon characters are merely vehicles for gags. Afterall, the Disney philosophy was to create a one-note character from which jokes could be spun. Donald Duck gets mad, Goofy is dumber than a brick, and Mickey is the straight man. Did Tom and Jerry exist for any other reason than piling on chase and violence jokes? How many Mr. Magoo cartoons went beyond the jokes of impaired vision?

Before Chuck Jones and Friz Freleng were assigning real personalities to their pen-and-ink charges at Warner Brothers, the Popeye shorts from the Flesicher Studios had established the idea of a multi-dimensioned cartoon character.

The best Popeye cartoons were those which kept in character with E.C. Segar's classic comic strip. If you're not familiar with *Thimble Theater*, it's well worth the time to pick up of the reprint volumes available and find out about Popeye's roots.

Segar introduced Popeye to the strip in 1929, and he caused a sensation in the already popular feature. Segar not only had a distinctive drawing style, he was a master storyteller. Segar's strip was both humourous and adventurous with its comedy ranging from sly parody to outright slapstick. Segar wrote for an adult audience as well as for kids, and his characters were fully developed literary creations. Segar even coined two words which are now part of common American English; "jeep" and "goon."

A publicity photo of E.C. Segar

Max Fleischer may not have been the businessman Walt Disney was, but Max knew Popeye's success in comic strips could translate into animation popularity as well.

The Fleischer Popeye shorts also were a landmark with the fact the characters were "human." The studio had a strong tradition of "human" characters (as opposed to funny animals) with its success with Betty Boop and Ko-Ko the Clown. The solid source material, along with their own talented animators and writers, gave the studio a wealth of story possibilities.

That's the great irony of the character. If you say "Popeye" today, you often get reactions based on the later Famous cartoons. That's the perception that every Popeye short revolves around Olive flirting with someone, rejecting Popeye, needing Popeye to rescue her and then Popeye trouncing the guy. The Famous shorts transformed Popeye to the level of Tom and Jerry; set up a formula in which the characters sacrifice complexity to spot gags. Considering the engrained prejudice

Studio portrait of Max Fleischer from the mid-Thirties.

A detail from the trade ad Paramount placed in *Variety* to signal the success of the first Popeye cartoon.

against broadcasting black and white material in today's television market, one can understand why the color Famous productions have carried so much weight in determining Popeye's public image.

The Fleischer Studio shorts effectively captured much of the strip's original spirit by producing shorts which had their humor originating from both plot and character rather than just gags. There were plenty of spot gags in the shorts, but unlike the early Betty Boop cartoons, the stories were much more tightly constructed.

That's not to say there weren't misfires in the beginning. Clearly the first year or two of Popeye shorts illustrated the struggle for the Fleischer animators and writers to find ways of adapting the Segar comic strip. For the first time in the studio's history, the story and the characterization had to be the *source* of the humor, instead of merely the rack on which gags were hung.

Too many of the early shorts emphasized the gruffness of the Popeye character, and indeed the early appearances of Popeye in the Segar cartoons showed a rough and tumble sailor. *Season's Greetinks* concludes with Popeye beating Bluto so hard the flashes of light and stars circling Bluto's head fly over to an evergreen tree to decorate it for a Christmas ending! Clearly, finding a middle ground for the character took the studio a while.

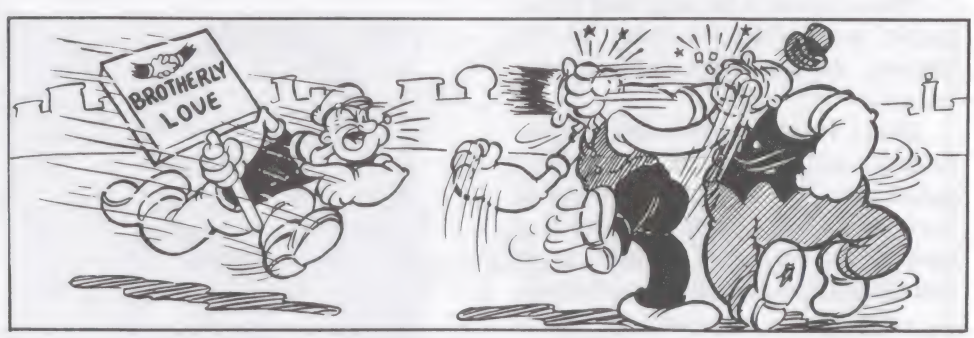
Other early shorts just would plop Popeye, Olive, and Wimpy down into a situation, such as a haunted ship in *Shiver Me Timbers,* which strongly resembled a Betty Boop short with all of its variety of spooks and lack of a strong plot.

Another early short shows a more satisfying direction. In *A Dream Walking* Popeye and Bluto attempt to save a sleepwalking Olive from hurting herself in a construction site. This hilarious short draws its humor from its intricate timing as Olive walks from swinging girder to girder as the two sailors attempt to keep her from falling and each other from receiving credit for their efforts. It served as a model for later shorts in which Popeye attempts to save Swee' Pea from himself (i.e. *Baby Wants A Bottleship*).

The toughness/tenderness personality which made Popeye so appealing is also well illustrated by *Can You Take It*. Olive is a nurse at an athletic club,and Popeye is so smitten by her, Popeye elects to join the club which puts him through a truly torturous initiation. After a momentary setback, Popeye succeeds and brings the building down with Olive in his arms.

Observers could note the growth of the animated Popeye's character. Clearly, he operated consistently by his own rules. Popeye didn't begin fights. In fact, he was more than willing to avoid a fight. He only struck back when he had no other alternative. He was loyal to Olive, although she was a chronic flirt. He loved animals and little kids, and could not abide cruelty to either. "I Yam What I Yam, and That's All that I Yam" is both an admission of modesty and a declaration of self-esteem.

Brotherly Love is one wonderful example of the mature Fleischer Popeye. Olive is involved in a movement to promote understanding and tolerance. Popeye, hearing Olive's rally on the radio, instantly identifies with the message, and as he goes for a walk, helps people he meets as he sings about "brotherly love." His belief in non-violence is tested when he happens

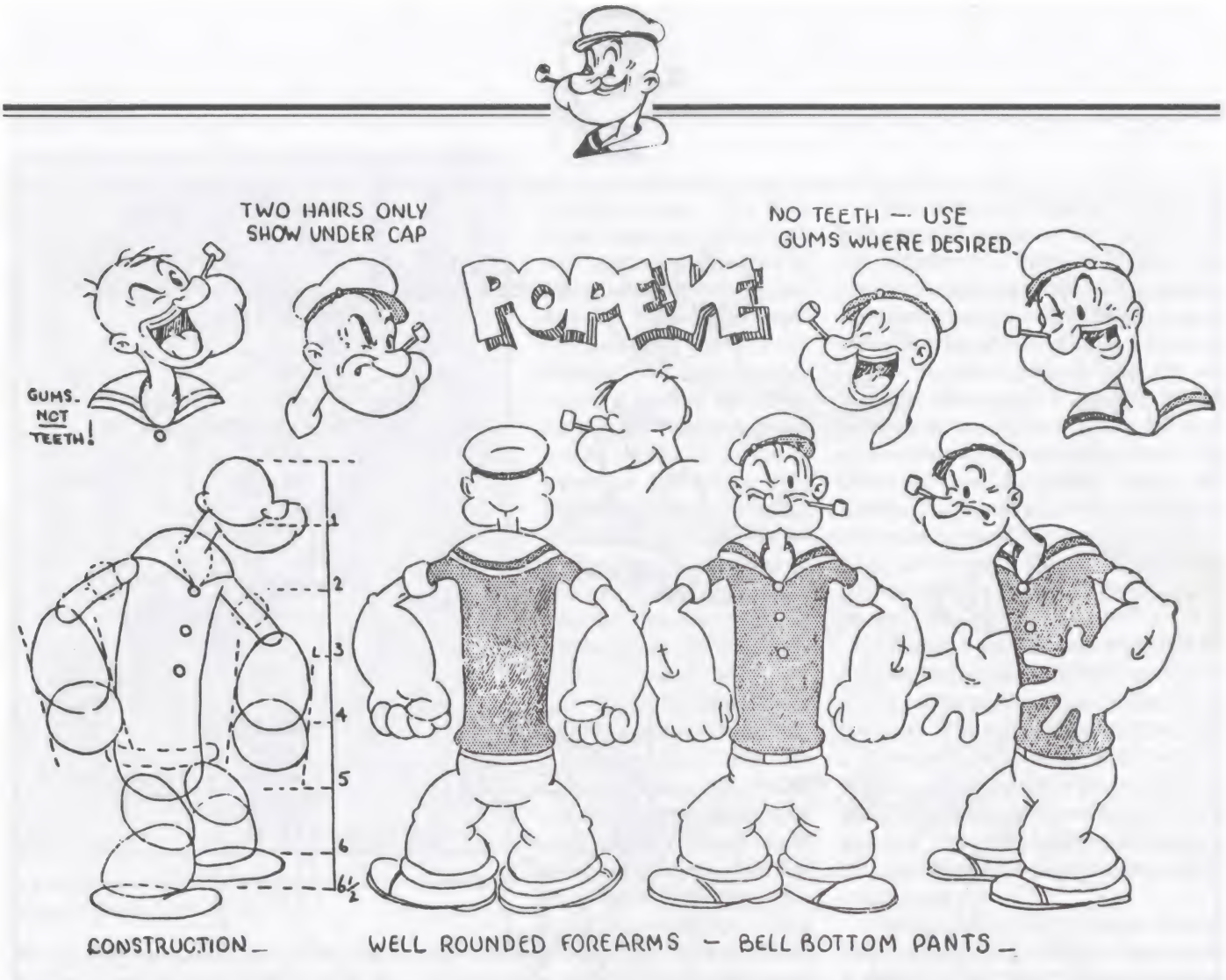


Featured in Paramount-Fleischer's Cartoon—"BROTHERLY LOVE"

BROTHERLY LOVE

Words by BOB ROTHBERG — *Music by* SAMMY TIMBERG

Publicity art for *Brotherly Love* created for a Popeye sheet music folio. © King Features



The classic Fleischer Studio Popeye as detailed in this mid-Thirties model sheet. © King Features

upon a gang war between two rival clubs. When he tries to break it up, naturally he's clobbered. When Olive is hurt when trying to stop the fight, Popeye and his can of spinach swing into action.

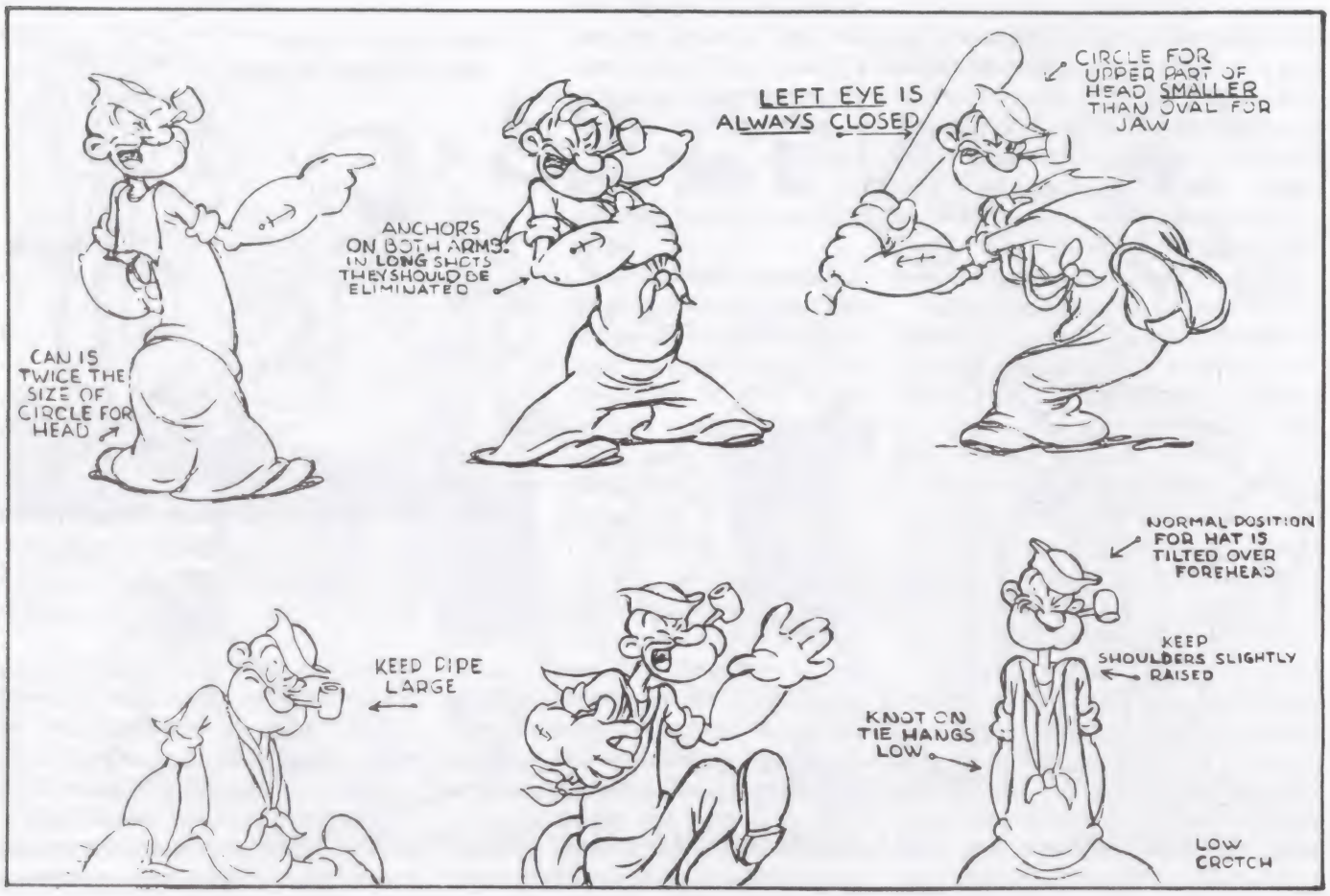
Goonland is another great short with the Fleischer Studio staff adapting Segar's epic story of Popeye trying to find his father. It is, at turns, a funny, frightening and rousing adventure that not even a break in the film can stop.

Segar's *Thimble Theater* strip treated its characters as an acting repertory company, a tradition the Fleischer studio maintained to a certain degree. Bluto, the villain best associated with the animated Popeye, often played different roles, appearing as Sinbad the Sailor and Ali Baba, leader of the Forty Thieves. And like *Thimble Theater*, the animated cartoons often had a delightful self-conscious quality. Popeye comments on this when kissed by Olive,"Gosh, I've never made love in Technicolor before!"

The relationship between Popeye and Olive was often explored in the Fleischer shorts, and their courtship was unique in animated cartoons. Until *The Flintstones* debuted on television in 1960, there were simply no cartoons which addressed a relationship. In *Mutiny Ain't Nice*, after an affectionate dockside farewell, Olive stows away, despite Popeye telling her that his superstitious crew consider a woman onboard to be bad luck. When discovered, Popeye fights for her safety, but makes her travel the rest of the trip in a rowboat attached to the ship by a rope.

Another distinctive aspect of the Popeye's shorts was its use of music. The Fleischer Studios had been leaders in using contemporary popular songs in their *Betty Boop* and *Screen Songs* series. Being affiliated with Paramount, the studio could use songs and performers represented by Paramount's Famous Music division. The famous Popeye theme song, written by Sammy Lerner, is one of the most recognized theme songs in the history of motion pictures. Quick, hum the theme for the Donald Duck cartoons!

The Popeye shorts featured much original music, though, written largely by Sammy Timburg. Timburg, who just


CIRCLE FOR UPPER PART OF HEAD SMALLER THAN OVAL FOR JAW
LEFT EYE IS ALWAYS CLOSED
ANCHORS ON BOTH ARMS. IN LONG SHOTS THEY SHOULD BE ELIMINATED
CAN IS TWICE THE SIZE OF CIRCLE FOR HEAD
NORMAL POSITION FOR HAT IS TILTED OVER FOREHEAD
KEEP SHOULDERS SLIGHTLY RAISED
KEEP PIPE LARGE
KNOT ON TIE HANGS LOW
LOW CROTCH

A model sheet from the mid-Forties reflecting the change in the character. ©King Features

recently passed away, was, in the very best sense of the phrase, a Tin Pan Alley composer who put together dozens of songs and scores for various Fleischer productions. He did not receive the acclaim of other cartoon composers such as Carl Stalling or Scott Bradley, but he certainly deserved it. Fleischer alumni have told me how the studio used the same team who composed many of the songs for Disney's *Snow White* on *Gulliver's Travels*, but it was Timburg's song, *It's a Hap, Hap Happy Day*, which became the only hit from the movie. Perhaps Timburg's most shining moment was his work on the Fleischer *Superman* shorts, although he told me he liked writing for Betty Boop the best!

Between Timburg's songs and Jack Mercer's ability to scat sing as Popeye, the Fleischer shorts were filled with music which both amused and advanced the plot.

With the success the Fleischer Popeye cartoons enjoyed, one can only wonder why the decision was made to change the look and, ultimately, the content and style of the series. In interviews with me over the years Fleischer vets such as Jack Mercer and Myron Waldman both criticized the changes. The belief both men share is the Fleischer management believed "updating" Popeye was necessary in order for the shorts to compete with those from other studios.

The "modernization" of the character included first re-designing Popeye, and later Olive and Bluto. Gone were Segar's dark sailor suit, and in its place were U.S. Navy whites. Popeye's face was streamlined, making it look less like Segar's original. It's worthy to note that E.C. Segar died in 1938, and while he was not actively involved in the production of the cartoons, his influence was definitely felt. The Popeye cartoons of the Thirties were connected to the Segar strips with their use of Segar's supporting players and the continual identification of Popeye as a sailor. Every Fleischer Popeye cartoon bore a legend identifying the cartoon as being produced by arrangement with "King Features and Segar." It's clear that King Features, after

An original ad for the 3-D Popeye short. (Courtesy Musum of Modern Art)

the death of Segar, allowed the Fleischer/ Famous Studios carte blanche with the character. Interestingly, King Features maintained the *Thimble Theater* comic strip as the institution Segar founded. There was no "modernization" there.

The changes made with the Fleischer Studio intensified after the Fleischer brothers lost control of the studio in the spring of 1942. The plot lines featuring Popeye as part of the Navy seemed to be a natural during World War II. One certainly could not fault the new Famous Studios for wanting to contribute to the war effort in that way.

It's difficult to fault them for other changes as well. Consider the climate in the animation industry during and after World War II. The cartoons which were getting the greatest attention were the *Tom and Jerry* cartoons (with their multiple Academy Awards), Warner Brothers shorts with their fast, topical humor, and the Disney cartoons with their meticulous animation and critical acclaim. The kind of funky, urban cartoon that had been the Fleischer hallmark was considered woefully out-of-style. As one Fleischer animator told me, the studio didn't understand its style was unique. With the influx of animators and writers from Hollywood animation studios to the Fleischer Studio for the production of its two features, that special style was diluted. The bottom line was the marketplace demanded a different kind of cartoon.

So the Famous Studios gave us a different Popeye. If anything, they took the *Thimble Theater* concept of the characters as actors to an extreme. Their Popeye could be a sailor, but he could also be a barber, a cook or a traveling salesman. Even Olive Oyl received a make-over in order so she would be more (*shudder*) glamorous! Famous used the Popeye characters in stories which were far removed from the characters' comic strip origins. The tough/ tender character, the romantic triangle of Popeye, Bluto and Olive, and the super-power of spinach were elements which were plugged into a variety of plots.

There were many talented professionals who worked on the Famous shorts, and it's awfully enticing to try to second-guess just what was going on there. One fact that can't be over-looked is that Famous was a division of Paramount Picutres. Max Fleischer was an independent producer whose distributor was Paramount. Paramount owned Famous lock, stock and animation board. The Famous cartoons were strictly made on a budget, and the kind of neat details which were found in the Fleischer shorts just weren't affordable anymore.

The critics of the Famous Studio have been reported to say that Sam Buschwald, Izzy Sparber and Seymour Kneitel, the three men who ran the studio for Paramount, lacked imagination. All three were veterans of the Fleischer Studio, and in fact Seymour Kneitel was Max's son-in-law! I'm not sure this assessment is entirely fair or accurate as the Famous Studio did have some commercial success with Casper The Ghost and characters such as Herman and Katnip. They found a juvenile niche in the animation market. They were handsomely-made, and scored, but they lacked the spark that characterized the work of the Fleischer Studio.

I think the problem was in the fact the Famous Studio, unlike the Fleischer Studio, was not in the position to be leader and an innovator. The style of their cartoons was a *response* to the industry, not something organic. Among creative people there is a world of difference between being allowed to follow your own instincts and having to do something that is considered safely commercial.

Unfortunately, the Famous Popeye cartoons were safely and dully commercial. A number of the shorts were re-makes or partial re-makes of older cartoons, undoubtedly a money-saving effort. Popeye appeared in 3-D at Famous during the height of the 3-D craze, and Famous produced a special 20th anniversary short in 1953 with Popeye being feted by other Paramount stars.

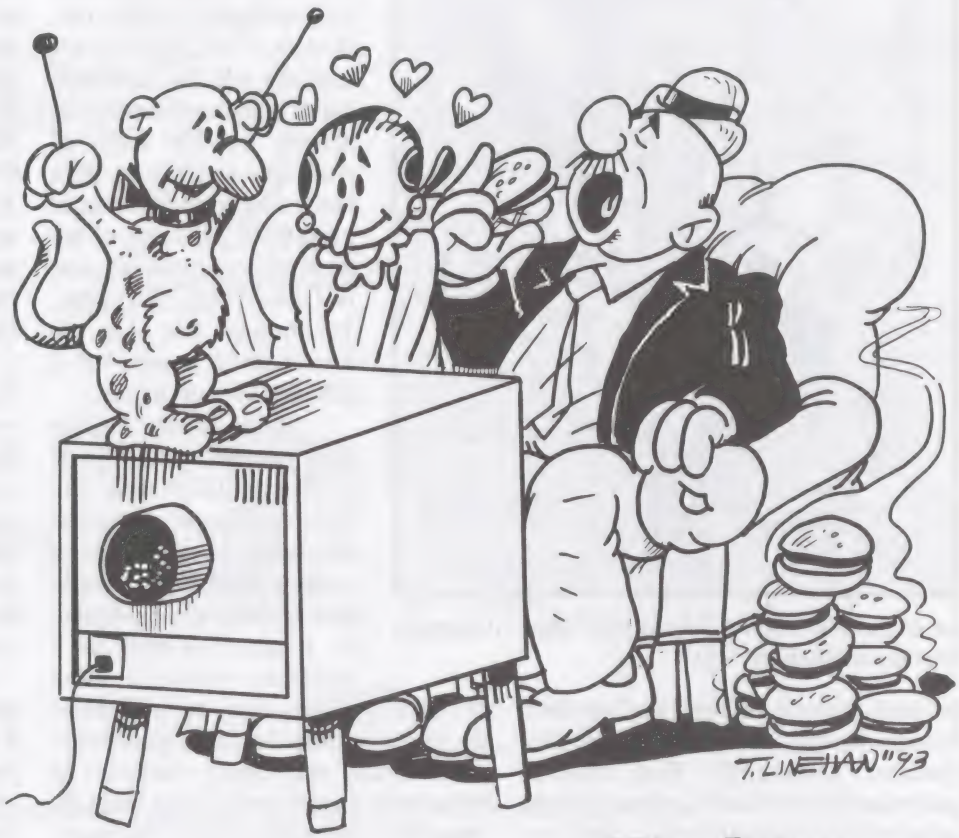
The series ended in 1957 with the re-organization of the Famous Studio. That same year, Paramount sold the broadcast rights of the entire Popeye library. At the lowest point of the character's theatrical career, a new generation had the opportunity of seeing the classic Popeye cartoons.

With the 60th anniversary of the first Popeye cartoon noted this year, one can only hope the new owners of the library, Turner Broadcasting, will finally broadcast these great cartoons in their original black and white form and release them to home video.

THE SAILOR MAKES WAVES ON TELEVISION

by Jim Korkis

Popeye the Sailor has appeared on television longer than any other animated superstar. From the moment his cartoons first premiered on tv over thirty-five years ago, the popular character has never been absent even a week from American screens. Over 400 new adventures made specifically for television have been constantly repeated along with over 200 episodes made for theatrical release. Yet, this amazing achievement is often only a footnote in animation scholarship when the character is discussed.



©King Features

The ugly, tough-talking, one-eyed sailor was probably one of the last characters anyone would have picked to win the hearts of millions. However, without a doubt, Popeye was definitely well loved. In 1934, one year after his animated debut, a poll of theater owners showed Popeye more popular than Mickey Mouse.

From 1933 to 1957, the Fleischer and Famous Studios turned out 234 theatrical shorts featuring the man who was strong to the "finich." Unfortunately, by the mid-Fifties, the cost for making theatrical short cartoons had become prohibitive and most of the major cartoon studios began to close up shop. Instead of going to the movies, Americans were staying home to watch television. Seeing a chance to make some additional money on their backlog of cartoons, many studios sold them to the new entertainment medium.

Paramount Pictures sold the entire block of Popeye cartoons to Associated Artists Productions (A.A.P.) for TV distribution for three million dollars. Within five years, the series had recouped roughly ten times its cost. The Popeye cartoons were syndicated to approximately 150 tv stations. A 1960 survey of 136 stations conducted by the American Research Bureau discovered the average rating for a Popeye show was 15.1, which was considered especially high for a five-a-week daytime show. In many cities, it was discovered that the Popeye cartoons had a higher rating in 1960 than when they first appeared over three years earlier.

All of this success irked King Features. The newspaper syndicate firm owned no television rights to these movie shorts and therefore did not share in the huge amount of money being made from cartoons starring one of their top characters. Their solution was to hop on the bandwagon and announce that they were going to produce over 200 new Popeye cartoons in color.

Since tv stations who stripped the original cartoons into a half hour show daily ran through the original library in less than six months before they had to repeat episodes, King Features felt that the stations would jump at the chance to get almost an additional six months of new product, especially in color (since many of the older Popeyes were in black and white).

"It took about thirty years to make the first 234 cartoons, but the next 206 were whipped out during 1960 and 1961," complained Jack Mercer, the well known voice of Popeye, who was hired to recreate his famous voice role for the new cartoons. Mae Questel was also back to perform as Olive Oyl and Jackson Beck signed on to

do voice chores for the villain Brutus, just as he had done for Bluto.

There is some mystery as to why the new Popeye cartoons changed the character name from Bluto to Brutus despite the fact that everything else about the character remained the same. A *TV GUIDE* article from 1960 stated that "As for the character Brutus, the change from Bluto is just another case of going back to the original. In the first newspaper comics Brutus was the villain." That statement is not entirely correct although even cartoonist Bud Sagendorf, who was Segar's assistant and took over the newspaper strip for many years, has stated that "in the Fifties, after a disagreement on the origin of the name, he became known as Brutus in comic books and newspaper strips."

Jackson Beck, who voiced both characters, told Popeye historian Fred Grandinetti that "Bluto was a late character in *POPEYE* and I think owned by Fleischer or Paramount. When King Features took back the property and kept the character, they had to change the name. This is my understanding of the situation and I could be mistaken."

[Editor's Note: Bluto was indeed developed as a villain for the Fleischer series allegedly with some input from Popeye creator E.C. Segar. Certainly the name "Bluto" suggests Segar's imaginative writing style. GMD]

At the time it was even rumored that the name was changed to placate the Disney organization which supposedly felt that the name sounded too close to its dog character, Pluto. Today, the Disney legal department generates an average of three lawsuits a day but even in 1960 the Disney studio did not hesitate to intimidate any imagined interlopers to the Disney heritage.

Perhaps King Features felt the name change might be an easy way to identify the new cartoons from the old. If that were the case, they needn't have worried because the differences became painfully obvious without the mystifying name change.

In the new cartoons, Popeye retained his white sailor suit and cap from the Famous cartoon series. But in a major shift from the older cartoons, the new series tried to incorporate more of the newspaper strip influences including using characters like the Sea Hag, King Blozo and Eugene the Jeep. This may have been done to provide more springboards for stories or to once again distinguish the new cartoons from the old.

It was apparent that no one studio would be able to handle the production of over 200 cartoons within the time deadlines set by King Features. At least five studios were pressed into service to churn out the new cartoons.

One of the most prolific suppliers was Jack Kinney's studio. Kinney had started working at Disney studios in 1931 and stayed for nearly twenty-seven years. Although he was perhaps best known for directing the popular Goofy cartoons, he won an Oscar for the Donald Duck short *Der Fuhrer's Face*. In 1957, he left Disney and set up his own company.

In his autobiography, Kinney remembered that it was his connection with Al Brodax that gave him the opportunity to work on the new Popeye tv series. "I soon signed a contract for more than one hundred of the little darlings," recalled Kinney, "I set up shop on a crash program. Of the many talented people available, quite a few who joined us were ex-Disney, including animators Harvey Toombs, Hugh Fraser, Ken Hultgren, Rudy Larriva, Cal Howard, and Grace Stanzell; story men Ed Nofziger, Al Bertino, and Dick Kinney; and Evie Sherwood and Juanita McClurg, both excellent checkers. We used various ink and paint, inbetween camera, cutting and so on, and started cranking out Popeyes by the dozen for a very reasonable sum. Ken Lowman wrote original music for each, and my son Mike came into the act as a film editor and cameraman. We had a hardworking group and really knocked 'em out on schedule. Our theme song was 'I'm looking at the world through green colored glasses—everything is spinach now'. In addition to the Popeyes, we were doing pilots on *Krazy Kat* and *Barney Google* with our own crew. But alas, the Popeye series was eventually taken to Italy because it could be done cheaper there than in the United States."

Kinney's cartoons also featured story work by other Disney storymen like Ralph Wright, Joe Grant and Milt Schaffer which resulted in some funny stories done in weak animation. Also Kinney was responsible for a pilot cartoon for the series. Entitled *Barbecue For Two*, it featured Popeye, Olive, Wimpy and Swee'pea and a bearded bully named neither Bluto nor Brutus but "Junior." The pilot was done with the characters in their newspaper strip designs rather than the final design for the series.

Kinney's group is credited with a hundred of the new Popeyes including *Popeyed Columbus*, *Popeye's Service Station*, *Li'l Olive Riding Hood*, *Swee'pea Through The Looking Glass*, and *Popeye and the Dragon*. Many of the Kinney cartoons revolve around history themes or are variations of fairy tales and well known children's stories. Perhaps because it was responsible for animating so many cartoons in such a short time, the Kinney studio is also remembered for reusing animated sequences from one cartoon (like Brutus laughing or Popeye walking) in other cartoons in the series as a way of shaving costs and saving time.

Another studio involved with Popeyes was William L. Snyder's group. Snyder, an American investor, got interested in Czechoslovakian animated films. However, he felt they were slow paced so he agreed to finance the Gene Deitch-Jules Feiffer production of the Oscar winning short *Munro* if Deitch would go to Prague to help out. Deitch stayed in Prague and with less expensive labor costs turned out some of the strangest *Tom and Jerry* and *Popeye* cartoons. Some of the Snyder-Deitch work was farmed out to Halas and Batchelor, the British animation studio responsible in the Fifties for the animated feature *Animal Farm*. As a result, some of the animation for these cartoons was a bit more smooth and impressive than some of the other

Here's Gene Deitch's version of Popeye. (Jim Korkis Collection) © King Features

entries in the series. This group was responsible for about twenty-eight of the new cartoons including *Astronut*, *Goon With the Wind*, *Have Time Will Travel*, and *Beaver Or Not*. Many of the storylines emphasized science fiction themes.

Another producer who was called into service was Larry Harmon. Today, Harmon is perhaps best known as the man who created the Bozo franchise. He appears across the country and on tv to promote "the world's most famous clown." Harmon also holds the license to Laurel and Hardy and developed an animated tv series featuring the comedy duo as well as an animated series for Bozo the Clown, among other credits.

The eighteen films from the Harmon studio including *Ski Jump Chump*, *Caveman Capers*, and *Dead Eye Popeye* were directed by Paul Fennel with animation credited to artists like Cal Howard and Hal Sutherland (who would later help establish Filmation Studios). These cartoons were very simplistically animated with apparently very little checking since Popeye historian Fred Grandinetti has pointed out such sloppy scenes from this studio as Brutus in a short sleeve shirt one second which magically becomes a long sleeved shirt in the very next shot.

Producer Gerald Ray was responsible for ten new Popeyes with writing by Henry Lee. *The Big Sneeze*, *Egypt Us*, and *Take It Easel* were some of the entries. These shorts can be distinguished from others by the fact that Ray often closed his cartoons with Popeye singing new lyrics (inspired by the cartoon adventure) to his popular theme song.

The remaining sixty-three Popeye cartoons were done by the Paramount studio with some of the remaining staff of the old Famous Studio. Seymour Kneitel, who had worked as an animator on the very first Popeye cartoon for Fleischer and later served as a director on the Famous Studio Popeyes, did the directing chores for the new cartoons. Jack Mercer, besides supplying Popeye's voice, also worked as a storyman on the series along with Carl Meyer. A handful of the stories were based directly on ideas and materials from Segar's "Thimble Theater" strip including *Me Quest for Poopdeck Pappy* and *Wimpy the Moocher*. While these efforts don't reach the quality of the earlier cartoons, the efforts of old time Popeye animators like I. Klein and Marty Taras provided some moments of good animation.

"The cartoons are more difficult to do these days for the people providing the voices," claimed Jack Mercer, "In the old days, we were given the drawings first and then recorded our voices for the sound track. These days we record the dialogue first. It's harder to do the ad-libs and make the funny little asides and mumblings that are so very much a part of the Popeye character."

For these new cartoons, Mercer not only supplied the voice of Popeye but also Wimpy, Poopdeck Pappy and at least on one occasion the voice of Brutus.

When these new cartoons were dumped on the television market, stations grabbed them so that competing stations wouldn't get the gems and to mix them in with the older cartoons. Most stations randomly mixed the older and newer cartoons, providing a taste of culture shock for young viewers. Not surprisingly, there was no further interest in continuing the series,

The King Feature Popeye shorts mixed the look of the Famous Studios Popeye (Navy whites) and brought back Olive's comic strip dresses. (Jim Korkis collection) © King Features

Popeye and Olive finally marry and have a son on *Popeye and Son*. (Jim Korkis Collection) © King Features

although King Features' wise decision to use color guaranteed the new cartoons got renewed.

In 1972, Popeye was the lead character in an ABC Saturday Superstar movie presentation entitled *Popeye Meets the Man Who Hated Laughter*. This Saturday morning show was the showcase for hour-long specials, some of which spun off into series. This particular Popeye adventure was directed by well known commercial animator Jack Zander and Hal Seeger (best known for his cartoon series *Milton The Monster*).

Popeye had to save some of the top King Features stars like Blondie and Beetle Bailey from the evil designs of Professor Grimsby, who wished to stop the spread of laughter. Helping Popeye with his task were King Features heroes like the Phantom and Flash Gordon. Once again, Popeye proved better than his material in this unmemorable hodge-podge of a story.

Although Popeye had not appeared in any new animated adventures for quite some time, he was one of King Features most successful characters. By the mid-Seventies, more than a thousand different products bore Popeye's likeness and the comic strip was syndicated to more than 250 newspapers around the world.

In 1978, King Features decided to increase Popeye's visibility by licensing the animation rights to Hanna-Barbera for a new Saturday morning tv series. The initial announcement also stated that H-B would produce an hour long Popeye primetime Christmas special in 1978 for CBS but that project never developed.

The All New Popeye Hour debuted on CBS in September of 1978. The series was divided into three main segments: *The Adventures of Popeye* which featured new stories of Popeye and his friends, *Dinky Dog* which was the misadventures of the world's largest dog and no connection to the Popeye universe, and *Popeye's Treasure Hunt* with Popeye and Bluto as competitors in the search for treasure like the Dalmonica Diamond. (During the 1979 season, this last segment was often replaced by *Popeye's Sports Parade* with Popeye in various sports competitions.)

During the show, and in keeping with the new educational tone of most cartoons of the time, there were also thirty second segments known as *Popeye's Health and Safety Tips* which ranged from not taking drugs to the dangers of overeating. However, the real danger according to Standards and Practices was the fear of too much violence.

"My voice work for the new cartoons is more or less a sideline now," stated Mercer before the new shows aired, "My main job is writing the scripts and doing the story boards for the shows. The difficulty is cutting down on the violence. Popeye never did hurt anyone unless it was absolutely necessary. But the silly part of it is, the old violent shows are still being seen on tv all over the country and nobody objects. I've recorded the opening song for the new shows. And instead of using the old beat whistle to punctuate 'I'm Popeye the Sailor Man. Toot-Toot', I do the whistle myself."

Mercer was the only "old" voice recruited for the new cartoons. Marilyn Schreffler was now the new voice of Olive Oyl with Allan Melvin doing Bluto (the Brutus controversy apparently forgotten) and Daws Butler doing a W.C. Fields imitation voice for Wimpy.

Within the limitations of Saturday morning tv in the Seventies, Hanna-Barbera tried to recapture the spirit of the earlier classic cartoons. While he retained his white sailor hat, Popeye was re-outfitted in his original dark blue top. Brutus became Bluto. The stories were fairly straightforward attempts to pit Popeye and Bluto against each other for the affections of Olive. There were some parodies of popular film themes resulting in episodes like *Close Encounters of the Third Spinach* and *Spinach Fever*.

In fact, *Spinach Fever* (a take off on the disco movie *Saturday Night Fever*) along with three other episodes from the show formed the basis for the first primetime Popeye special, *The Popeye Show* (also known as *Popeye Catches Disco Fever*) which ran on CBS in September of 1978. The first all new Popeye primetime special was *The Popeye Valentine Special* which premiered on CBS February 14, 1979. Olive goes on a cruise to find "Mr. Right." While Bluto tries to win her affections, the Sea Hag tries to get Popeye to marry her. After several comedic disasters, Bluto ends up with the Sea Hag and Olive finally decides that Popeye is Mr. Right after all.

In 1980, H-B redesigned the Saturday morning show. It was retitled *The Popeye and Olive Comedy Show* and was cut back to a half hour. Besides the adventures of Popeye segments. there were two new elements: *Private Olive Oyl* had Olive and Alice the Goon as clumsy Army privates constantly frustrating their diminutive Sgt. Blast (voiced by Jo Anne Worley), and *Prehistoric Popeye* with the Popeye family of characters as cave people. By 1983, the series was off the air.

During September 1987, perhaps one of the most unusual animated versions of Popeye appeared on CBS Saturday morning. Hanna-Barbera produced thirteen episodes of a half hour series entitled *Popeye and Son*. Major changes were made in the spinach eating hero who actually became a mere supporting character to his nine year old son. Popeye, in a loud Hawaiian shirt and without his familiar pipe, had married Olive Oyl and produced a blonde son named Junior who hated spinach. Bluto had married a woman named Lizzie and produced a son named Tank who was as big a bully as his father. Olive was a modern woman more worried about her aerobics than the half-hearted disasters that threatened her family. The adventures revolved around Popeye Junior and his friends. Maurice La Marche did the voice of Popeye, Marilyn Schreffler did Olive and Lizzie, Allan Melvin was Bluto and Josh Rodine was Popeye Jr. Fans of the traditional Popeye were unhappy with this undated approach and the series only lasted one season.

Since that time, nearly half a decade ago, the animated Popeye has once again gone into a form of semi-retirement awaiting patiently his next chance to recapture old animated glories.

While the television efforts never matched the classic theatrical cartoons featuring Popeye, they introduced new generations to the magic of the character and sparked fond memories in older viewers. Popeye was strong enough to survive poor stories and weak animation and still retain his sense of humor and fair play. After sixty years, he is still strong to the "finich."

Jim Korkis is a well known animation historian who has co-authored several books on the subject. He is also a member of The International Popeye Fan Club (5995 Stage Road, #151, Bartlett, TN 38134) and has a small but impressive collection of Popeye memorabilia.

Waldorf's Toon Tavern

by mark hurley

WHY THE KING FEATURES' "POPEYE" IS GOOD "POPEYE": A DEFENSE

By Fred Grandinetti

Since the batch of 220 color Popeye cartoons, produced by King Features Syndicate, made their television debut in the Fall of 1961 they have been the subject of ridicule! Many critics have called them all, "terrible," "junk" and just plain "awful." While it's true there are several clunkers in the group . . they're not all bad and many are quite enjoyable. What a critic has to keep in mind about these cartoons is that they were NOT produced by one studio–

© King Features

several were involved and each studio's work has to be judged on its own merits.

Because the Fleischer/Famous Studios Popeye films became such an overnight smash on television screens during the late 1950s, King Features Syndicate felt it would be good business sense to announce the production of 220 "new" Popeye cartoons–all in color. The color part was played up since many of the films in the previous package were the black & white Fleischer films. King Features wanted the cartoons done quickly to cash in on the Popeye-craze so a two-year production time limit was required which explains why several different production outlets were hired to produce the series. The studios involved were: Jack Kinney Productions (who produced clever scripts but the animation in many was downright horrid), Gerald

© King Features

Ray, Larry Harmon (weird animation with extremely simple character designs), William Snyder/Gene Deitch (bizarre background music with animation that ranged from great to fair) and Paramount Cartoon Studios (the best cartoons produced for the series).

The real ghastly cartoons include: *Popeye the Fireman*, *Timber Toppers*, *Popeye and The Giant*, and *Sea Hagracy*; all produced by Jack Kinney Productions which took many shortcuts on the animation. As a kid growing up I didn't notice the poor animation, but I can barely sit through some of Kinney's productions now. The best Kinney cartoons include the pilot for the series, *Barbecue For Two*, which featured the comic strip designs for the characters, *Hypnotic Glance*, *Popeye's Cool Pool*, and *Popeye the Ugly Duckling*.

The cartoons produced by Gene Deitch/ William Snyder featured excellent animation by the team of Halas and Batchelor. Gerald Ray produced some cleverly scripted cartoons including, *Popeye's Junior Headache* where we're introduced to Olive's niece, "Deezil" who beats the tar out of Popeye while the sailor baby sits for Olive. *Baby Phase* is a cute cartoon where Swee'pea wants to become a famous juggler.

Larry Harmon's unit featured fast-paced cartoons with interesting plots; *Caveman Capers* where we learn how Popeye started on his spinach-diet. *Childhood Daze* had Popeye turning into a baby with Olive and Brutus as his parents. Paramount Cartoon Studios featured several entertaining films which were highlighted by Winston Sharples' background music which was heard in the Famous Studios' cartoons. *The Spinach Scholar* had Popeye trying to get an education and winds up going through the whole school in one day. *Spinach Greetings* was a Christmas cartoon where The Sea Hag kidnaps Santa Claus! *Rags to Riches to Rags*, Wimpy inherits a ton of money but bets it all on a boxing match between Popeye and Kid Nitro! Wimpy attempts to make Popeye lose the bout but the moocher can't go through with it and passes the spinach to Popeye in his hour of need.

The fact that these TV-cartoons used more characters from the original *Thimble Theater* comic strip was a plus. The Sea Hag, Alice the Goon, King Blozo, Prof. O.G. WottaSnozzle and Rough House were all introduced in the cartoons in this series. A few scripts, *Poppa Popeye*, *Wimpy the Moocher*, *Me Quest for Poopdeck Pappy*, *Mystery Melody* were all adapted from original Popeye comic strips from the 1930s. The fact remains that these 1960-61 cartoons have endured since their television debut and if anything, have made Popeye's animation career more interesting to write about.

Fred Grandinetti is a film historian, writer (Popeye The Collectible) and host of *Drawing With Fred*, seen on Boston-area cable outlets.

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Whatever Happened to the Fleischer Popeye Cartoons, Anyway?

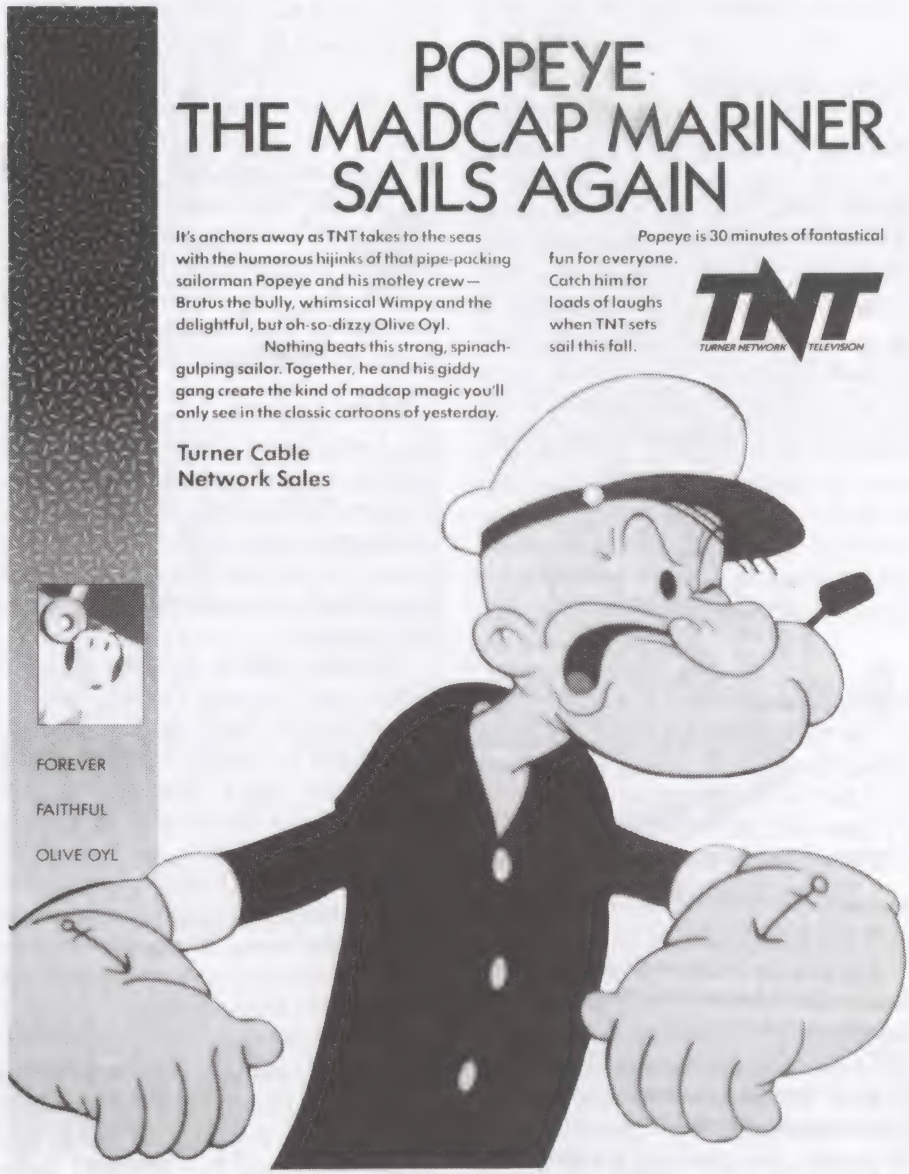
by Eric Walker

My earliest memories of Popeye are in black-and-white. When I was growing up during the early 1970s, we had two TV sets in our house; one was in black-and-white, and it was there that I first saw the Fleischer Popeye cartoons. The series had been in TV syndication for a long time when I began watching them, and they were shown regularly on weekday and Sunday mornings on Channel 38 in Boston. I remember being fascinated by Popeye and his eternal battles with Bluto; I loved Popeye so much that I began imitating his speech in everyday life - and this caused Dad to make sure I stopped watching the show. For several years, Popeye was forbidden in our house; however, the ban eventually faded away and I began watching his cartoons again.

By that time I'd reached the age where I could appreciate cartoons as cartoons, and not as role models. However, unbeknownst to me, the Fleischer cartoons had mysteriously vanished from the airwaves, and the only Popeye cartoons airing were the mediocre-to-poor Famous Studios cartoons of the forties and fifties, and the abysmal, wretched TV cartoons of the sixties. For a while I decided that Popeye simply wasn't as good a cartoon character as I'd thought. I shrugged him off and instead concentrated on Warner Bros. cartoons instead.

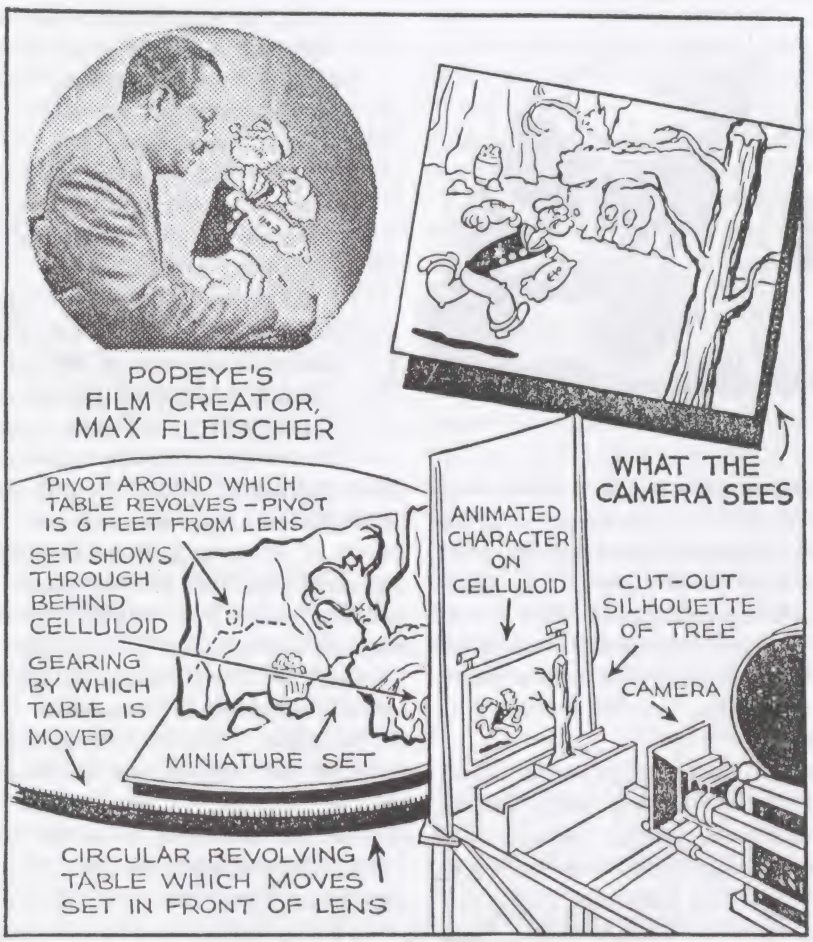
For most of the 1980s, the Fleischer Popeye cartoons remained in limbo, seen only by animation fans and at the occasional film festival. They were never broadcast on TV, and it was next to impossible to find them on video as well. While the Famous Studios cartoons remained a cornerstone of daytime TV (and they still are), their predecessors were in danger of being forgotten by an entire generation of kids.

However, Ted Turner began broadcasting colorized versions of the Fleischer cartoons on TBS and TNT. Seeing them again brought back pleasant memories of the Popeye I used to know and love, all those years ago. Now, I've never liked colorization, but I decided that seeing colorized Fleischer cartoons was better than no cartoons at all. I didn't think the colorization was that bad, either — until I had the opportunity to see some of the original cartoons in black-and-white.


POPEYE
THE MADCAP MARINER
SAILS AGAIN
It's anchors away as TNT takes to the seas with the humorous hijinks of that pipe-packing sailorman Popeye and his motley crew — Brutus the bully, whimsical Wimpy and the delightful, but oh-so-dizzy Olive Oyl.
Nothing beats this strong, spinach-gulping sailor. Together, he and his giddy gang create the kind of madcap magic you'll only see in the classic cartoons of yesterday.
Popeye is 30 minutes of fantastical fun for everyone. Catch him for loads of laughs when TNT sets sail this fall.
TNT
TURNER NETWORK TELEVISION
Turner Cable Network Sales
FOREVER
FAITHFUL
OLIVE OYL

Trade Ad for the Turner colorized Popeye cartoons. Note there is no mention these are colorized versions of the Fleischer classics.

The Fleischer cartoons were owned by United Artists when Turner acquired the MGM/UA film libraries in the mid-1980s. Since the executives at Turner Entertainment believed that no one wanted to see anything in black-and-white anymore (this was before the disastrous video release of the colorized *Casablanca*), the classic



An explanation of the Fleischer 3-D effect from a Paramount pressbook for *Popeye the Sailor Meets Sinbad the Sailor* (Courtesy Museum of Modern Art, New York)

cartoons of old were colorized. They now appear on Turner's cable networks and in his syndication packages. As a result, the Fleischer cartoons are broadcast all over the country, every day - but not black-and-white. It's difficult to find the original Fleischer cartoons on video in any form, and so many people have never seen Popeye the way he was supposed to be seen.

Max and Dave Fleischer had developed their own unique style in the Koko the Clown and Betty Boop series, and with Popeye they became Walt Disney's only true competitor throughout the 1930s. While Disney's cartoons had the finest animation (and the highest budgets) of their time, the Fleischer animators did their best to bring their work up to Walt's quality, and the animation of their Popeye cartoons is outstanding. Before the arrival of Tex Avery at Warner Bros., the Fleischer studio was the only cartoon factory that didn't slavishly imitate Disney. With their irreverent, adult-oriented humor and the delightfully silly banterings of Jack Mercer and Mae Questel, Popeye became one of the most popular cartoon characters of all time, with merchandise and fan clubs to rival Mickey himself. (According to Leslie Cabarga's The Fleischer Story, Roy Disney would come down to the Fleischer studio to steal animators by offering to double their current salaries.)

One has only to look at the original Fleischer cartoons in black and white to see how the colorized versions have been corrupted.

Roger Ebert eloquently defines the difference between black-and-white and color in his essay "Why I Love Black and White" (Roger Ebert's Movie Home Companion, 1990 edition), noting that black-and-white works best when it doesn't try to be realistic.

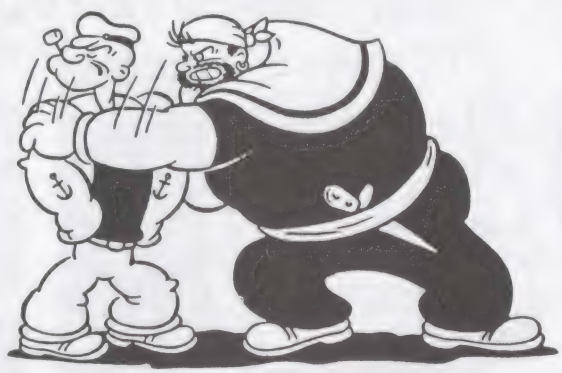
"Black-and-white movies present the deliberate absence of color. This makes them less realistic than color films (for the real world is in color). They are more dreamlike, more pure, composed of shapes and forms and movements and light and shadow. . .With color, you can throw light in everywhere, and the colors will help the viewer determine one shape from another, and the foreground from the background. With black and white, everything would tend toward a shapeless blur if it were not for meticulous attention to light and shadow."

This basic difference was used to the Fleischers' advantage in the Popeye series. Many of the cartoons employed meticulously painted backgrounds, which were carefully blurred to place an emphasis on the action going on in the foreground. Occasionally, actual real-life photographs were used as the backgrounds, which saved time and gave a more three-dimensional look to the cartoons. Furthermore, the Fleischers are famous for their use of elaborate miniature sets, built and rotated on the patented Fleischer animation turntable to provide stunning detail.

The hard labor that went into these set designs is lost in the colorized cartoons, which fill in the backgrounds with simplistic, gaudy images that reduce the beautiful paintings and photography to sloppy, cheap pictures that look as though they were thrown together in fifteen minutes. In the classic cartoon *A Dream Walking*, for instance, the entire film takes place at night — but the lighting looks as if it's drawn for a setting at high noon. In one risqué scene, Olive walks in front of the moon, and we can see her silhouette through

her nightgown. The colorized cartoon ruins the scene, and Olive might as well be passing in front of a painted circle or a billboard.

What's more, the colorization ruins the quality of the animation itself. The moving drawings in the black-and-white cartoons blend in with the still backgrounds, including the use of shadows and perspective. Careful use of blurred grey was employed to make the audience focus on the action so that they wouldn't notice that there was nothing else moving on the screen. Leonard Maltin notes how this effect was used in cartoons like *The Dance Contest*, as "a hazy-looking crowd stands motionless in the background as Popeye and Olive dance in the foreground." (Of Mice and Magic, pg. 110.) The Turnerized cartoons slap on the color so poorly that the characters stand out from the backgrounds instead of blending in with them; the moving characters look as though they've been placed in front of the scenery, and not part of it. The illusion of a moving ballroom has been completely destroyed.



And if that's not enough, entire scenes are deleted from cartoons for the sake of saving the effort of colorizing them. *Goonland* climaxes with Popeye and his Pappy battling the Goons of Goon Island. The fight is so ferocious that the film breaks, and all of the Goons fall out of the picture leaving Popeye and Pappy the victors. This scene was removed entirely from the cartoon, and we can't see it on TV at all. Why was it done? It couldn't have been edited solely to remove "offensive" material (Turner has been doing this with his Warner Bros. cartoons, too!), so the only possible reason to delete it would be because it's too difficult to colorize. Colorized live-action hands look sickly and unrealistic, so it was decided to simply leave them out entirely.

Oddly enough, the "cheater" cartoon *Adventures of Popeye* has only been partially colorized. The story stars a young boy, filmed in live-action, being pestered by a bully when he buys a Popeye comic book. Our lovable swab speaks to the kid from the magazine cover and tells him about his adventures (using scenes taken from earlier cartoons), after which he eats some spinach of his own and beats up the older kid. The live-action scenes are in black-and-white, but the animation is colorized.

But Ted Turner is not the only one to sin against Popeye. We mustn't forget the three two-reel Popeye cartoons made in color: *Popeye the Sailor Meets Sinbad the Sailor*; *Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp*; *and Popeye the Sailor Meets Ali Baba's Forty Thieves*. The Fleischers took especial care on these unique cartoons (which were often given billing reserved for full-length features), and the results were breathtaking. Filled with dazzling animation, great comedy, and excitement, the two-reel cartoons are among the Fleischers' finest achievements. (They're certainly more entertaining than the two full-length feature films forced upon them by Paramount.)

Unfortunately, these cartoons entered the public domain long ago. Since color cartoons are more acceptable to the people who package them (no one ever bothered getting the opinions of the kids who actually watched them), these cartoons can be found in any number of places today, usually on shoddily produced EP videos selling for $3.00 in the cheap section of your local K-Mart. The prints used to make these videos are awful: they're scratched and faded; they're cropped to various lengths to fit on the video; and they're missing the opening and closing credits (which were copyrighted by Paramount). I even saw one video company misspell the title of one cartoon as "Alladin."

As if to add insult to injury, Republic Pictures Home Video released a laserdisc in 1991 of the three two-reelers, under the title *Max Fleischer's Popeye Cartoons*. While the three cartoons are included on the disc (and side two is in CAV, so you can watch Ali Baba one frame at a time!), the quality of the print used on the disc is especially poor. Like the videotapes, the laserdisc is taken from the public domain. Republic claims that the disc was "digitally mastered," and the sound quality is good, but the poor picture is inexcusable.

Therefore, if you're looking for the three two-reel Popeye cartoons, the best place to find them is on Ted Turner's stations. Just as with his live-action films, Turner is proving to be an enigma to Popeye fans: he may have colorized the black-and-white films, but he owns the best quality prints of these three films, and if you can record them when you see them on TV, you won't be disappointed.

After seeing all this bad news about Popeye, one might hope that Turner will rectify the situation by releasing the Fleischer cartoons on video. The latest fad in family entertainment circles has been the wave of Turner-owned cartoons on videotape and laserdisc (the recent Bugs Bunny video collections, plus the *Golden Age of Looney Tunes*, *Compleat Tex Avery* and Tom and Jerry laserdisc box sets), so perhaps we'll be seeing the long-lost Fleischer cartoons on video at last?

Alas, this is the saddest news of all: the black-and-white cartoons seem doomed to remain in limbo. Domestic Home Video, the video distribution arm of Turner Home Entertainment, says that there are no plans to release the Fleischer Popeye cartoons on

video, in black-and-white or otherwise. Their office claims to have Turner's video release schedule through 1995, and there's no mention of Popeye anywhere. They're just not interested in black-and-white cartoons, and evidently they assume no one else is either.

This doesn't make sense. Turner's been making a killing by releasing the classic films of MGM and Warner Bros. on video; the 50th anniversary video of *Casablanca* is still selling like wildfire, even though it's in black and white. But the belief still exists that people (especially children) don't want to watch black-and-white cartoons—hence the disappearance of the Fleischer cartoons from TV during the 1970s, and Turner's subsequent colorization.

If you want to find the original Fleischer cartoons, therefore, I can only advise you to keep looking. They are out there, and there are many fans of the old spinach-eating sailor who can help us find the cartoons we grew up with. We may yet be surprised by future developments, because even Ted Turner can't escape the influence of the fans. Keep an eye on the Cartoon Network. Hint: don't be surprised if we see a grand celebration of Popeye's sixtieth birthday there this summer.

(Popeye isn't the only victim of the colorization craze, either. If you take a look at the Disney Channel's Halloween special, which aired last October and will no doubt be repeated this year), you'll see clips from The Skeleton Dance — in lime green!)

The black-and-white cartoons are nearly impossible to find on video. There's a collection of eight classic cartoons on videotape called *Popeye Original Classics* (Whole Toon Catalog, order number SNV008, $19.95). The two-reel features can be found easily, as mentioned already, but beware of low-quality prints. The best-quality video available is *Popeye Two-Reelers* (Whole Toon number RET7554, $14.95), which uses a better-quality print.

For more information, you can contact the International Popeye Fan Club. They publish a fanzine that's chock full of information, trivia, and people who trade and sell rare Popeye memorabilia. Their address is: International Popeye Fan Club, 5995 Stage Road #151, Bartlett, Tennessee 38134.

Since we're going to be suffering through colorized cartoons for a long time yet, we should mention the latest word in colorization. Warner Bros. has recently colorized many of their black-and-white, pre-Tex Avery cartoons, including the Buddy cartoons and the Bosko series; these cartoons can be seen on Nickelodeon's own Looney Tunes show. Those cartoons weren't very good (Chuck Jones has said that "nothing in the way of bad animation could make Buddy worse than he was anyway"), but the care in which the color process has been applied is impressive. The quality of the animation itself remains intact, with background details and smoothness of motion (what little there was) retaining the quality of the original cartoons; the end result is far superior to what happened with the Popeye series. If this care had been applied to Fleischer's gems, then perhaps Turner would not be so deserving of our wrath.

But because the colorized cartoons now exist, no effort is likely to be made in the future to "improve" the cartoons or upgrade their quality to something approaching the grandeur of the originals.

Popeye deserves better than this.

(Thanks to: Rob Buttery, for obtaining prints of the Fleischer black-and-white cartoons; Dick Connell, programming executive at the Cartoon Network and devoted Popeye buff; and Gordon Ranney of the Whole Toon Catalog for his invaluable assistance.)

Eric Walker is a Boston-based film buff and writer.

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Jack Mercer and his famous persona
© King Features

Jack Mercer: Popeye's Alter-Ego

By G. Michael Dobbs

Like most six year-olds in America in 1960, I loved Popeye. I adored the cartoons I saw almost everyday, and, in fact, our television repairman dubbed me "Popeye" after one of his housecalls.

In these still-early days of television, there was a wealth of old theatrical animation broadcast by local stations. As I grew older, my affections included the Warner Brothers shorts, and made-for-tv fare such as *Rocky and Bullwinkle*, but I never lost my fondess for Popeye. I suffered through those King Features shorts and the lacklustre Famous productions out of sheer loyalty.

The constant through all of these shorts was Popeye's voice, which much later I learned was performed by Jack Mercer.

Throughout his "life," Popeye the Sailor has been an underdog. The brilliant cartoonist E.C. Segar realized the rough sailor's appeal came from his lack of good looks and his scrawny body. Popeye never looked like a hero, and that made his heroics seem more significant than the rest of his comic strip contemporaries.

When Max Fleischer bought the animation rights to the character in 1933, his studio wisely kept what Segar had established and built upon it. The Fleischer Popeye was a gentle, self-effacing character who resorted to violence only as a last resort. It's little wonder why these wonderful cartoons were such a hit with Depression era audiences. Popeye was the Everyman who managed to win over great odds, and that also explains their enduring charm sixty years later.

Popeye's rough voice was first performed by singer and radio performer Bill Costello from 1933 to 1934. A wage dispute apparently ended Costello's tenure, and from 1934 to 1984, Jack Mercer was the voice of Popeye the Sailor. With the exception of Mel Blanc and Mae Questel, no one vocal performer had that long or distinguished career in animation.

Jack supplied a great number of secondary voices in Fleischer and Famous cartoons, and actually received screen credit of his work in both Fleischer features. Ironically, he didn't receive a theatrical screen credit for his work as Popeye until 1980 and Robert Altman's *Popeye*.

In the early 1960s, Jack was the one-man voice cast for Joe Oriolo's *Felix the Cat* television cartoons. Jack never really cared for the shorts, and once described how difficult it was to go from Felix's falsetto to the gravelly tones of Rock Bottom and the Professor. Jack supplied the voice of Popeye for the King Features and Hanna-Barbera television productions as well as commercials, until his death in 1984.

I met Jack Mercer in 1977 when I conducted the following interview in his apartment in the Woodside section of Queens in New York City. He was at first reluctant to meet with me as there had been an increasingly steady flow of interview requests from animation fans. Once he realized I was working on a Max Fleischer biography with the blessing of the family, he set up an appointment. He and his wife Virginia were wonderfully hospitable, and Jack was very gracious in answering my questions, some of which he had heard hundreds of times before.

I had been told that Jack was one of the most modest people who worked in animation. Despite his accomplishments, he had never received the type of personal publicity his colleague Mae Questel gathered. The biggest difference between the two vocal performers was that Questel actively worked as an actress on television, the Broadway stage and in films. Jack, whose other main contribution to the animation was his story work at Fleischer and Famous, didn't seek a career outside of animation in the way Mae had. The result was an unfortunate anonymity.

For years, there were a number of people who asserted to have performed the voice in the cartoons, and these untrue claims were painful to Jack. Even one of his co-stars in the cartoons made claims for years of having performed the voice. Years later I still can't get over the injustice of the situation. This very talented man had never been given the recognition his career deserved.

At the end of the interview, I asked Jack for an audio autograph, and he performed the *Popeye* theme song. It was a fulfillment of a childhood dream, and interestingly enough I couldn't watch him as he leaned towards the microphone of my recorder and sang. I just sat listening.

Jack Mercer: I was in show business, of course, my whole family was in show business, and they wanted me to do something else. I could draw a little bit, and my mother had an agent who booked her vaudeville act, and he was acquainted with someone at Paramount who suggested I go to the Fleischer Studios, and see if I could get some type of work drawing. When I first started I was in the opaque department. I went through all the various departments, the inking department, the in-betweening department.

Did you like it?

I enjoyed it, yes. I hadn't done any professional drawing before that. It was just on my own.

How did the job as Popeye's voice come about?

I was imitating various characters in the inking department just out of my own amusement, and everybody seemed to get a laugh out of it. And a lot of the people suggested I try out for it [the Popeye voice]

I didn't know they were looking for anyone. So I eventually went home, and tried to improve the voice I was doing. So I finally got the voice after I practiced a while. I thought I could really do the voice,

"I See that Guy from Fleischer's Has Been Back Again Recently!"

This cartoon from a Fleischer Studios house publication pokes fun at a real situation...partying animators who wound up visiting the Miami jails.

and got the quality I was after. I gave an audition over the phone to someone at Paramount. They heard it and from then on they said," Why don't you come over and do some voices." Which I did. Sort of a breaking-in period, I guess. They told me I was going to do the Popeye voice. That's how it started. You know, fooling around while I was working at the other jobs.

Did Max Fleischer make that final decision?

Well, there's the thing. I don't know whether it was Max because I was more involved with Dave and Lou [Flesicher] at that time. Whether he was informed about it, I don't know, but he never came around to see.

[Jack later commented that Max believed Jack was too skinny when he started performing the voice and suggested he eat spaghetti and drink Guiness Stout!]

What type of a guy was Dave Fleischer to work with?

He was always kidding around. Very jolly. I had no conflict with him at all as far as I can remember. It was always sort of a happy family.

How about Max?

As far as I was concerned I was working for Dave and Lou Fleischer and the animators. Max was always in the front office. I very seldom saw him. He was always engaged in some innovation for the studio, the technical end of things, inventing machines like the turnable for dimensional effects, things like that. Every once in a while I'd run into him and we'd say "hello." So as I say I knew very little about him. He invited me once out to dinner in Miami when he got his new home. I guess that's the only social event I could think of outside of appearing at the parties. Sometimes he'd come in and look at a picture or sit in on a recording session or something like that. Very seldom.

He was like the "Godfather," though. If you had any troubles, you'd go to him and he'd straighten them out.

After the 1938 strike was the studio still a happy family?

During the strike I was working in the story department, and that was sort of a section all by itself, you might say, and I didn't associate with the others. I didn't notice anything.

You see, with the story writers, we were just one big happy group. It was only the attitude of the opaquers and the inkers that might have been different. As far as I was concerned I didn't notice anything.

Other studio personnel were affected by the strike. Seymour Kneitel was injured by the strikers. Edith Vernick had to be escorted by the police through the picket line.

Well, I did have one incident. One day, of course, they asked everyone in there to pitch in and help anyway you could. If they needed someone to in-between I'd pitch in and help. The people out on the picket line used to take pictures of people going into the studio, and threaten you. One night I was going home on the subway, and some strange looking characters sat down on other side of me. There wasn't anyone else in the car at the time, so I felt perhaps they were trying to intimidate me in some way. It was very funny. These two fellows would come in and sit on either side of me. At the station before the one at which I usually got off, I got off the train real fast and left them sitting there! [laughing] The door closed, and the train went on. That's the way I got rid of them. Maybe it was just my imagination, I don't know. That and the fact they would harass you as you entered and left at work, and that they would take a photo of you going past their picket line.

What was the experience of Florida like?

They did increase a lot. A lot of people came in from the coast, and that did give us sort of a Disneyland atmosphere. All of those guys were crazy, and they brought a bit of Hollywood to Miami. I suppose that's why people thought it was all a party and I suppose there was, but I didn't get involved with it.

There was one fellow, Cal Howard; he did some crazy things. he had a car similar to mine, and he'd go around the neighborhoods screeching the tires. He sat up in the back of the car, and he had some arrangement by which he could reach the gas pedal. He'd sit in the back and steer the car. It was a convertible, and the cops were always after him.

I'd go out in my car, and they'd mistake me for him! I'd always have a siren blowing in back of me. I had a heck of time explaining it wasn't me. And he'd follow people around the studio: visitors, tourists. He'd make funny faces, all kinds of stuff and they would turn around because all the employees were laughing. He'd straighten

right up, and act like he was one of them, and they couldn't figure it out.

Did it ever bother you that you didn't receive screen credit for your work as Popeye?

Yes it certainly did. I think it would bother anyone because of this situation where so many people were claiming to have done it. That's the biggest thing I felt was bad. But that was just their policy. Mae [Questel, the primary actress for Olive Oyl's and Betty Boop's voice] couldn't do anything about it. They said something about it took too much time in the credits. I don't know what their reason was whether they felt if they wanted to make a change they wouldn't want to change the titles.

Your vocal work was so important to the success of the Popeye cartoons.

Well, maybe, they didn't think so. I suppose they figured the character itself and King Features was more important than the voice work.

Everyone who watches the Popeye cartoons loves your ad libs.

Everyone questions the fact why they were discontinued. You see, when we were doing the sound along with the picture, you could see these ideas would come as the picture ran. It just seemed like a natural thing to ad lib as you were watching the action. But then when it was pre-recorded, it was a different situation. I would try to select little lines here and there that would serve as an ad lib thought, and the ad lib is supposed to be thinking to yourself. And then they insisted on having the mouth action along with these ad libs which sort of spoiled that situation, don't you see?

I always thought it was funnier if you didn't see the mouth moving, and they use that in some of the cartoons now as a side remark, and you just see the character standing. They used that now in the modern films. I don't know if they got that idea from the old Popeyes or not.

There's a difference in the thought of the line when it looks like it's just stuck in rather than actually having been written in.

Jack Mercer took off where E.C. Segar left off in the creative mangling of language. Here's some of his great ad libs:
"That's all I can takes, and I can't takes no more."
"Show me the entrance to the exit."
"I wish I was lightheaded so I could see what I'm doing."
–collected by Gord Wilson

Who performed Bluto's voice?

The first one I worked with was Gus Wickie, and he was a bass singer. And then we had several others coming and going, and I've forgotten them as they were coming and going! And we wound up with Jackson Beck doing Bluto more than anyone else did. I did some Blutos every once in a while, but it was too much. A conversation between Popeye and Bluto is pretty rough trying to switch back and forth.

Did you ever become hoarse? Your natural voice isn't as deep as Popeye's.

As a matter of fact, it's deeper now than it used to be. I used to talk up here more [in a near falsetto voice] you see, but now I've got it down here.

[Virgina Mercer: "he always hated his voice."]

You know, it would always embarrass me when we would be recording, and after doing a *Popeye* I would ask for instructions, or how do you want this line read, and when I would hear myself back, it would scare the hell out of me! Because the voice would come back like this: [exaggerated falsetto] I'd say "Jesus, is that me?!" [laughter] So I've been trying to get it down lower all the time. As I get older it gets lower. Now when I have to do a high voice, I have to struggle.

Besides you, Mae Questel and whoever was Bluto, were there other people doing voices?

Once in a while, we'd have a larger cast, but most of the time there were just the main characters and the rest of us would pile in and do anything that came along. Someone would say, "You try this character, and you try this one."

And we each one would try out for it, and then they'd say, "You do this one. You take that one." And we get varied tonal qualities. So we didn't have too many people on a cartoon.

Could you describe a story session at Fleischer's?

What would happen would be if there was one story man or two story men, they would get together and try to get an idea for the character that was assigned to them. Everybody got the chance to do various characters. All just didn't have one character to work with, like Popeye. He [the writer] would try to get a synopsis, write that down, and send it to be accepted by the directors who were going to direct the picture. Lot's of times they'd all get together, and decide if they wanted to do the story or not.

If they didn't like it, you'd try to get another angle, and as soon as they accepted one, then you'd go back, and "gag" the synopsis. Then you'd have to draw it up in storyboards. You'd have meetings with the director, and sometimes the animators would come in, and we'd all discuss the material; if it's funny or not, if it was too long, all sorts of problems.

Then, after it was accepted, as far as we were concerned it would leave the room,

and we would try to get another angle on another character.

Also, we were asked to try to create characters. Now, with the Fleischers, they seemed to be interested in characters with some various capabilities; capabilities different than usual characters. For instance, a ghost that could walk through things rather than a character like, you know, like the Flintstones.

Did you have any favorite directors or animators?

No, we took them as they came! [laughter] Next! Whoever came in, we'd be interested in developing the story for them, and hoping we could sell the ideas to the directors.

Did you ever think of the violence as being bad in the Popeye cartoons?

It never struck anyone as being bad. It was supposed to be humorous. It always wound up in a funny situation even if Popeye was beating on somebody's head or something, it was funny. Bluto always wound up in a predicament that was humorous, humiliating, we thought.

I remember we heard one time that out on the coast they had pictures where the characters would be hit on the head with something, and they'd crack up like a plate, but they'd immediately come together again and be all right and run off. We tried to get some gags like that in our pictures, but the Fleischers said we'd better not pull any of that stuff because people are starting to complain.

Did you ever become bored with performing Popeye's voice?

Not really. Every cartoon was different. if you were doing a dramatic show on Broadway, and every night you were doing the same thing I imagine it would get boring after a while. But when you have different stories to do there's a constant creating there. We did have other characters to work with. It was a challenge. it was never boring.

I have a little pride in being Popeye's voice.

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Popeye on Video

by G. Michael Dobbs

Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of being a fan of the Fleischer Popeye cartoons is their absence on home video. It's difficult to try to interest younger animation fans in the character when it's so difficult to show them examples of the series. The Turner colorized shorts are better than nothing, but they're not "the real thing."

The one-eyed sailor has the dubious distinction of being the only major cartoon star not to have a legitimate licensed video release. Certainly, there are several different Popeye collections available from "underground" sources, but those of us who enjoy those classic cartoons long for collections which don't tax our VCR tracking control nor give FBI agents cause to come bursting into our homes.

Until Turner Entertainment decides what it will do with their property, the only Popeye tape legally available to feature the black and white cartoons is the new release from Snappy Video titled *Popeye Original Classics*. Steve Stanchfield has assembled eight cartoons, six of which were transferred from 35mm prints complete with the original Paramount logos. The collection is simply wonderful. Although hampered by only presenting those Popeye cartoons in the public domain, the collection features selections from the series at its height.

Little Swee-Pea shows off the marvelous Fleischer 3-D sets as Popeye takes his "infink" to the zoo, while *The Paneless Window Washer* has some mind-boggling perspective scenes. Two of the shorts are examples of the low budget approach at the Fleischer Studios. Both *Customers Wanted* and *I'm In the Army Now* have framing stories which allow the use of footage from previous cartoons. The Popeye sing-along short is also included, and the tape concludes with a Famous short from 1943, *Me Musical Nephews*.

The 35mm prints are damn near pristine, and the two 16mm prints used are acceptable. While the tape is not letter or window-boxed, the transfer is as professional as any major company release.

© King Features

The only problem with this tape is that it whets your appetite for more vintage Popeye. Where do you go from here?

There are dozens of public domain Popeye tapes featuring the three color specials the Fleischer Studio produced in the late Thirties. *Popeye meets Sinbad the Sailor*, *Popeye meets Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, and *Aladdin and his Magical Lamp* were extremely popular two-reel specials released during the Christmas season. The specials contained some marvelous animation and songs, and represented highpoints in the studio's production.

Somehow these three properties fell into the public domain, and they can be found on literally dozens of cheap sell-through videos. While finding them may be easy, finding decent prints and acceptable video transfers is another issue.

The best collection of the color specials I've seen is the tape offered by Video Treasures. The color is a little dense at times, but the prints are in fairly good shape. This tape was available about five years ago, and may still be found in discount stores.

The easiest to find collection of these wonderful shorts, though, is the tape produced by Republic Home Video on their Spotlight label. Republic's tapes of other Fleischer productions, such as *Mr. Bug Goes to Town*, *Gulliver's Travels* and their Betty Boop tapes, are marvelous. Regrettably, their prints of *Aladdin* and *Ali*

Continued on page 60

How Well Do You Know Popeye? A Popeye Cartoon Trivia Quiz

by Gord Wilson

1. What character was the original star of E. C. Segar's "Thimble Theater"?

2. In the "Thimble Theater", who is Castor Oyl?

3. 1929 saw the debut of what famous "Thimble Theater" character?

4. Segar's early "Looping the Loop" comic feature chronicled the goings on in what city?

5. E. C. Segar had "M.P.O." tatooed on his arm. What do the letters stand for?

6. Name Popeye's magical pet.

7. What is Wimpy's full name?

8. Popeye's first cartoon role was as a walk-on. Who starred in the cartoon?

9. Popeye got his distinctive chuckle from what entertainer?

10. Who voiced Popeye in the Fleischer cartoons?

11. Who voiced Olive?

12. Who wrote the familiar theme, "I'm Popeye the Sailor Man"?

13. Name the first Fleischer Popeye Cartoon/

14. To what question did Popeye give the famous reply," 'Ja think I was a cowboy?"

15. Name Popeye's Pop.

16. Name Popeye's four nephews.

17. Who would gladly pay you Tuesday for a hamburger today?

18. Why is Popeye strong to the finish?

19. Alice the Goon worked for what nemesis of Popeye?

20. What was Bluto's name changed to in later cartoons?

21. Who played Popeye in the live-action movie?

22. Who played Olive Oyl?

23. What distinguishes *The Ace of Space* (1953) from other Popeye cartoons?

24. *Shaving Mugs* is a remake of what 1936 Popeye cartoon?

25. In *Popeye Meets Ali Baba's Forty Thieves* (1937), who accompanies Popeye through the desert?

26. What does Popeye say to a can of spinach?

27. In *Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp* (1939), where does Aladdin live?

28. What song does Popeye sing in the film?

29. In the *Popeye and Son* cartoons, what does Popeye Jr. hate?

30. In a recent TV ad campaign, what does Popeye prefer over spinach?

***Answers** on page 60*

The *Other* Dark Knight

By Judith Reboy

Disney's *Darkwing Duck* has a fan following that almost resembles an underground cult. Most "serious" animation fans I know hesitate to admit they watch it...unless they're talking to someone else who does.

Perhaps the problem is its Disney pedigree, which brings unfair images to some minds, either of standards which the show's television-sized budget could never hope to reach, or of animators in shackles menaced by hordes of accountants and market researchers.

If this is true, I hope that those individuals can set their prejudices aside for one half hour and give *Darkwing Duck* a try. It may not set the animation world on its ear, but it almost always gives me much needed laughs at the end of the work day.

The stories are a unique blend of cruelty, strangeness and sweetness that remind me of the scripts the late Michael Maltese wrote for Warner Brothers. While the writers are hip enough to have a sequence where cutesy Care Bear types are terrorized by a 1950's B movie-type monster, they aren't so jaded that Darkwing and his preteen daughter Gosalyn can't have heart-to-heart talks without falling out of character.

As for strangeness, one of the funniest episodes, *Night of the Living Spud*, has the populace of Darkwing's home base, St. Canard, menaced by Posey, an eight foot high mutant vampire potato in a wedding dress. David Lynch and David Cronenberg would be hard pressed to think of something more bizzare than that.

The main villain of that episode is Dr. Reginald Bushroot, a nerdy half-duck, half-plant loosely spoofing Swamp Thing. He's a terrific creation, because unlike most of the heavy-handed villains of recent cartoons, the writers encourage the audience to sympathize with him rather than Darkwing.

Bushroot is basically a nice guy who resorts to robbery, murder and conspiracy to overthrow the government only when some of the same things that annoy us all happen to him, such as peer pressure or rejection.

Television's other dark avenger. © The Walt Disney Company

In *It's a Wonderful Leaf*, it's the typical rudeness of last minute Christmas shoppers at the St. Canard Galleria which pushes him over the edge. After watching him being beaten up in the checkout line while attempting to pay for his purchases, it's hard to begrudge him a chance to get even with the people who took his purchases out of his hands.

Not all the villains in St. Canard are as likeable as Bushroot. Negaduck, Darkwing's counterpart from an alternate universe, would scare *Sleeping Beauty's* Maleficent. Although he enjoys stealing, he prefers wanton destruction or subjugating the other members of his gang, the Fearsome Five.

The stories featuring Negaduck are usually strong because Negaduck's total lack of any redeeming qualities allows Darkwing to be somewhat more vicious in response, leading to slapstick of a sort I haven't seen since the networks started watering down *Looney Toons*.

Darkwing himself is a complex character. Perhaps he's not exactly an ideal role model (he's the sort of ego-driven guy who carries a stash of autographed pictures of himself, and asks the local desk sergeant to alert the media when he drops a crook at police headquarters), and his plans often fail because his keen eye for obscure details is blind to the blatantly obvious. (In one episode Negaduck uses a crust of bread from a room service sandwich to lure Darkwing to his hideout, since he'd missed

the huge banner with Negaduck's picture on it.)

However, while his excesses provide some great gags, the writers rarely allow him to win by default. For all his faults, Darkwing can also be brave and selfless, and he usually comes to his senses in time to save the day.

The voice cast for *Darkwing Duck* is another source of its charm. Jim Cummings, the gifted impressionist who breathes new life into such characters as Winnie the Pooh, Tigger, Louie the Ape and the Tasmanian Devil, shows as much skill in creating original voices for Darkwing and Negaduck. His readings bring a subtle layer of emotion to his characters that may not have been originally intended. He's also quite good as Darkwing's meddling neighbor Herb Muddlefoot, using the Andy Devine voice he perfected for *Who Framed Roger Rabbit.*

Terence McGovern and Hamilton Camp are fine recreating their *Duck Tales* roles of Launchpad McQuack and Gizmoduck, and Christine Cavanaugh's (of Nickelodeon's *Rugrats*) sweet delivery makes Gosalyn lovable despite her sometimes obnoxious behavior. (I maintain that Gosalyn is there to help parents remember the joys of monster movies, junk food and flagrant disobedience, rather than to give kids someone to identify with.)

Darkwing's rogues' gallery has an impressive array of talent behind them. The hour-long pilot, *Darkly Dawns the Duck*, features Tim Curry as crime boss Taurus Bulba. Dan Castellanta, the voice of Homer Simpson, does double duty as the suave evil secret agent Steelbeak and an electrically charged screwloose named Megavolt. In a future episode, Phil Hartman, best known as the gentle Frankenstein monster on *Saturday Night Live*, will voice a ghostly villain named Paddywhack.

Given the expected limitations of budgets, *Darkwing Duck* is a nice looking show. The various cityscapes of St. Canard are beautifully detailed and very distinctive. Toby Shelton did almost as fine a job on the individual character designs as he did on *Who Framed Roger Rabbit.* (If you look quickly, you'll see that the switch that opens the door to Darkwing's secret hideout is located in a statue of another Shelton character, Basil of *The Great Mouse Detective.*)

If you want to see a cartoon show that's well put together and full of maniacal 'toon fun, take a chance on *Darkwing Duck.* Or to quote the Masked Mallard of Mystery himself, "Let's get dangerous!"

Darkwing Duck Episode Guide

ABC Version: Season One

These 13 episodes originally aired on the Disney Channel in the Spring of 1991 to help launch the character, before joining ABC's schedule during the 1991-1992 season. In September 1992, they were placed in syndication as part of the *Disney Afternoon.*

Principal Voice Cast:
Darkwing Duck/Drake Mallard: Jim Cummings

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Launchpad McQuack: Terrance McGovern
Gosalyn Mallard: Christine Cavanaugh
Honker Muddlefoot: Katie Leigh
Herb Muddlefoot: Jim Cummings
Blinky Muddlefoot: Susan Tolsky
Tank Muddlefoot:Dan Hill
J. Gander Hooter: Danny Mann
Agent Gryslikoff: Ron Feinberg
Negaduck:Jim Cummings
Megavolt: Dan Castellanta
Morgana Macawber: Kath Soucie
Gizmoduck: Hamilton Camp
Steelbeak: Rob Paulsen
Tuscernini: Kenneth Mars
Moliarty: Jim Cummings

That Sinking Feeling: Moliarty drags several large structures from the surface world underground as part of his plan to conquer the surface world. (Note: The voice Jim Cummings uses for Darkwing in this episode is significantly different.) Moliarty's Henchmole: Lorenzo Music.

Film Flam: Gosalyn finds herself in trouble with Drake and with her school counselor when she tries to make them believe that Tuskernini is taking characters off movie screens to commit robberies.

Negaduck: Megavolt accidentally hits Darkwing with his "Tron Splitter", separating him into a wimpy good self and a dangerous evil self. A must-see for anyone who hates Smurfs and Care Bears. (Important note: The Negaduck who appears in subsequent episodes is a different character, whose origin is explained in the syndicated episode: *Life, the Negaverse and Everything.*)

Slaves to Fashion: Binky's attempt to turn an unwilling Gosalyn from a tomboy to a lady gets unexpected help from the personality altering costumes that Tuskernini donates to a costume party at Gosalyn's school.

Fungus Among Us: Launchpad quickly deduces Morgana's scheme to corner the pizza topping market in St. Canard, but Darkwing is too lovesick to stop her. This episode introduces Morgana, who has proven to be one of the most unique characters in animation, because she actually believably evolves over the course of several episodes from an unrepentant criminal to Darkwing's girlfriend and ally without losing the nasty edge which makes her so much fun to watch in this episode.

Something's Fishy: When the beaches of St. Canard become polluted, Neptunia, a mutant fish, wages war with the city to protect her undersea home. Neptunia: Susan

Silo.

Tiff of the Titans: Steelbeak uses the rivalry between Darkwing and Gizmoduck to conceal his theft of a secret military weapon. *Duck Tales* ' fans will note a number of references to that show's continuity.

Calm a Chameleon: A woman with chameleon-like powers goes on a massive crime spree. Meanwhile, Darkwing creates a pint-sized Frankenstein monster when he gives Honker some tips on sprucing up his wimpy image.

Battle of the Brainteasers: A group of alien parasites crash land on earth and masquerade as hats in a plot to take over the world using Darkwing's arsenal and Honker's genius. This is one of the show's best made-for-network offerings. At several points it has the feel and character designs of Chuck Jones at the top of his form.

Bad Tidings: Darkwing and Gryslikoff get on each other's nerves even more than usual when they're marooned on an unchartered island, while Steelbeak uses the moon's gravitational pull to create massive tidal waves.

Going Nowhere Fast: In a clever spoof of *The Flash*, Negaduck zaps Darkwing with a particle accelerator, which gives him super speed...but ages him as well.

A Brush With Oblivion: Boy genius Honker winds up in the slammer when he can't even convince Darkwing that an art theft was committed by a woman who jumped out of a painting. Splatter Phoenix: Andrea Martin.

Merchant of Menace: When J. Gander uncovers evidence that Herv's door-to-door Quackerware business is a cover for criminal activity, Darkwing resigns from the case and uses his Drake Mallard identity to prove Herb's innocence.

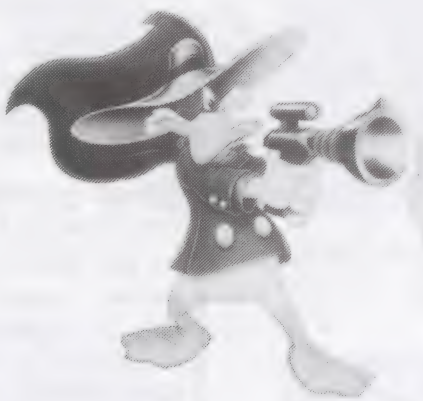
Season Two

Additional Voices:
Meraculo Macawber: Frank Welker
Cousin Globby: Jim Cummings
Aunt Nasty: Kath Soucie

This second season, which began airing in September, 1992, focuses more on Darkwing's domestic situations, particularly his relationship with Morgana, whose relatives become regular characters.

Monsters 'R Us: In an episode introducing the second season cast, Darkwing crashes Morgana's family reunion. Not thrilled with his daughter's choice of a "normal" suitor, Meraculo decides to show Darkwing, Launchpad and Gosalyn how the other half lives...with monsterous results.

Inherit the Wimp: In order to do a school theme about a relative, Gosalyn uses Quackerjack's time top to bring some of Drake's legendary ancestors to St. Canard...Only to discover that they weren't all that heroic. But heroic or not, they must help Darkwing defeat Megavolt and return



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to their own times. Sir Quackmire: Roddy McDowell

The Revenge of the Return of the Brainteasers, Too: When the alien hats return to get revenge on Earth's greatest hero, Darkwing is distressed to find out that they're after Honker!

Star Crossed Circuits: The new super computer SHUSH not only makes Launchpad feel useless, it also develops a serious crush on the Masked Mallard. D-2000: Victoria Carroll

The Steerminator: Taurus Bulba, the first super villain Darkwing ever fought, is brought back from the dead by Steelbeak and FOWL as sort of a "Robo-Bull". Bulba wants no part of them, however. He plans instead to get revenge on Darkwing and Gosalyn. For the type of show that Darkwing Duck is, this episode is particularly frightening and suspenseful, as was the syndicated pilot story to which this is a direct sequel. Taurus Bulba: Tim Curry

The Frequency Fiends: Another malfunctioning SHUSH device zaps Gosalyn and creates a trio of energy creatures, each with one of Gosalyn's least endearing habits.

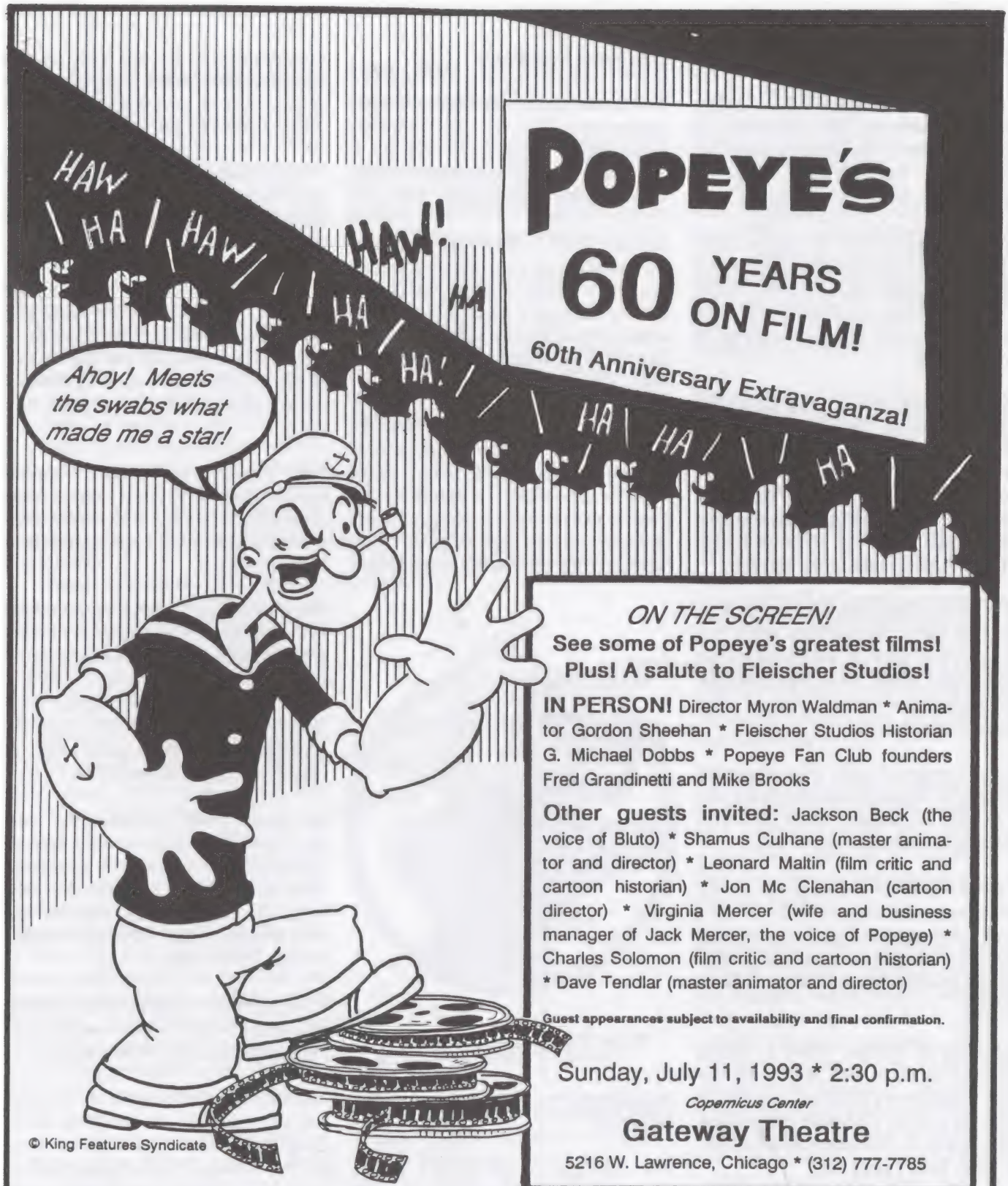
Paint Misbehavin': Splatter Phoenix returns to rob St. Canard and destroy any and all artwork that doesn't meet with her approval, starting with a comic book convention where Darkwing Duck and Gosalyn (in her Quiverwing Quack identity from the syndicated episodes) are guests of honor. Splatter Phoenix: Andrea Martin

Hot Spell: When Darkwing and crew accompany Morgana to her alma mater to watch her give a lecture on witchcraft, Gosalyn, dejected by her inability to learn magic, is tricked by Lucifer into stealing a book from the Library of Forbidden Spells. Lucifer: Marty Ingels

Fraudcast News: Gosalyn's idol, a tabloid newscaster, decides to make her own news as the arch criminal, the Bugmaster.

Clash Reunion: The origin of Megavolt and a partial origin for Darkwing. When Drake attends his class reunion, he discovers that his classmate, Elmo Sputterspark, is really Megavolt. Unfortunately, this discovery also causes his classmates to

Continued on Page 61



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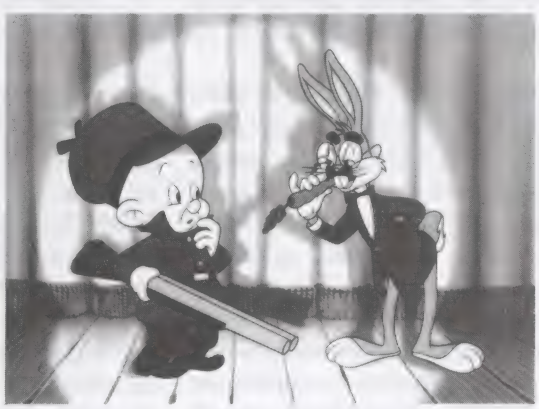

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From Creator to Artist

Part Two of an interview with Ray Harryhausen

Part Two
By Stephen R. Bissette

SB: 20 Million Miles to Earth (1957) was your last archetypal black and white 1950s monster movie. The Ymir was such a striking creation. He wasn't out to hurt anyone, he didn't even eat meat, he ate sulfur. The film's nominal hero torments him throughout the entire film!

RH: It was sort of a message about the exploitation of the unknown. Ymir had to be a villain in the sense that he was an unknown quantity. As one of the characters said in the picture, the Ymir were never aggressive as he knew them up on the planet Venus. The dog, when it attacked him, made him aggressive, just as humans, when they attacked him, provoked him to violence. All he wanted to do was look for sulfur and go home. He didn't want to battle elephants and everything. The elephant attacked him!

So we tried to create this underdog of the poor animal being exploited like King Kong was, and several people shed tears when he fell off the Colosseum.

Well, I was one of them.

We touched your heart!

You did, indeed. 20 Million Miles to Earth was shot in Italy?

Yes, in Rome. We shot a lot there. I wanted a trip to Rome — that's why I wrote the bloody outline of the story! I wanted to get to Europe.

My first attempt failed when I wrote The *Elementals*, with these flying bat-creatures nesting in the Eiffel Tower. I always wanted a trip to Paris and I couldn't afford it, so I thought I'd write a script that entirely took place in Paris. They were just starting to use European locations at that time, so I wrote this outline and sold it to Jack Deitz, who financed *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1953). We had two scripts on it, but despite *Beast's* success, for some reason he couldn't get it off the ground.

The Elementals remains a tantalizing concept. What was the story?

Another planet had fired missiles — cocoons — down to Earth — we don't know what planet. These cocoons were like butterfly cocoons: they would hatch and the creatures would then go into caves. They were enormous, and they would metamorphise into these bat creatures, like a butterfly. This little boy discovers this, and by the time he alerts the adult world to all this, they've escaped from the cave and started nesting in the Eiffel Tower. They would attack cable cars going up the Alps.

We had a scene I'd illustrated where they attack the cable car, the cable breaks, and six dozen fall out of the car as the bat creatures swoop down and grab them. We had various gimmicks like that: chasing people in wagons as they evacuate and so on. We wanted to make it quite spectacular. I made a lot of drawings, which I still have

photographs of, and it could have been a fun picture if it had come out at that time. Unfortunately, it was never produced.

About that same time, I had written The *Giant Ymir*. When we were looking for another subject I sent my outline to Charlotte Knight, and she developed it into a fifty-page treatment. We submitted it to Charles and Columbia, and they bought it.

You had previously worked with Charlotte on the fairy tales.

Charlotte Knight did the narration for them, and then I worked with her on them, too.

20 Million Miles to Earth was also your transitional picture for Columbia.

Yes, we had done two films for producer Sam Katzman. Earth vs. The *Flying Saucers* (1956) was the last one, and *20 Million Miles* was the first one for Morningside.

The 7th Voyage of Sinbad (1958) represented such a leap in terms of production economics and boxoffice success, well out of Katzman's stable and into color features. How did you manage that?

Well, we made tests using color and had them developed at Columbia's lab, and we decided to go ahead with it. We made the picture for very little money; 7th *Voyage* cost $650,000.

It proved to be quite a hit. I still have the Time magazine full-page review declaring it "the sleeper of the year."

Quite. The *Hollywood Reporter* and *Variety* practically said "every Hollywood technician should see this film." I think that's what kind of put me in an awkward position, shall we say, with people who'd worked in Hollywood for so many years. To think some little upstart would come along, and someone would say "every Hollywood technician should see this picture!"

It had many faults, but they weren't as obvious as many faults in other productions. When I look back at most of these pictures, I want to slide under the seat. If I'd only taken ten minutes more, I could have gotten a better result! But you've got to be practical. You have 360 shots to do. If you did one a day, that would be over a year, so you have to cut your time down some way. Our average picture had 300 to 400 set-ups, shots, because our leading characters were animated. Nobody else touched these kinds of films outside of Obie.

When you think about it, your leading characters, your villains and partial-villains, are all animated characters playing parts that a human would play — only a human wouldn't have the physiognomy — our pictures were quite unique. And they weren't just special effects; I always get quite irritated when they say "that's a special effect picture," you know? They were never meant for that purpose. We used special effects to put on the screen these fantastic images that you could only see in a storybook.

I think I've said this many times before, but I would see these Maria Montez Arabian Nights pictures, and it was sort of cops and robbers. They would talk about the Roc and the Cyclops, but you never saw it on the screen. I was bound and determined, particularly after (Alexander) Korda made that wonderful version of *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940), which was a real inspiration, to put on the screen these elements that were only talked about in previous films.

With 20 Million Miles to Earth and Sinbad, you began shooting your films overseas. Is this when you chose to move to Europe?

We took the big step around then, in 1959. I have no regrets — I was glad to get away from Hollywood. You had no locations. Television was using up all the locations in Hollywood. You can't keep using Malibu Beach for a lost island, and you can't keep using the Grand Canyon for a lost island, they're overused. Brice Canyon is too familiar — all the scenery in America is so overly used in television. We felt Europe was the best place for us to get fresh, new locations, which we did.

Did you ever have a brush with working for television, aside from your unsold experiments with animated cigarette commercials?

That was the main one. Obviously the fickle finger of fate destined me to become involved in features, as I wished, because the dancing cigarettes venture collapsed, as I told you before.

It was all for the best in the long run. Perhaps I'm rationalizing in hindsight, but I doubt television would have ever provided me with the opportunities I had — certainly, it wouldn't have landed me in Europe!

Once you were in Europe, did you find that the countries you were filming in were aware of your films? Had they seen them?

We shot a lot in Spain, we were one of the first companies outside of *The Pride and the Passion* (1957) that shot films in Spain. We were new to them, but we initiated them to it. We used Spanish art directors, Gil Parrendo, and many others. We had only two English people, (cinematographer) Wilkie Cooper and his first assistant cameraman, and Charles and I, and the rest were all Spanish crew. We shot on the Costa Brava, and we shot at the beach at S'Agaro up in northern Spain, near Barcelona, and we also shot in Madrid, in the early days.

You later shot Jason and the Argonauts (1963) in Italy, and you've mentioned before that the interiors were done in one of the Italian studios. What studio were you working at?

The Palentino studio, right in the heart of Rome, on Palentino hill. I can't remember the exact details. We did mostly location work, but we did shoot the entire picture in Italy, we used the studios in Rome to finish it.

We shot in Paestum, down in southern Italy, in Naples: the temples, these wonderful four-thousand year old temples were where we shot the Phineas and the Harpies sequence. Where else do you find temples like that? I scouted Greece, and they never had the money to restore and keep them like Italy did, so we decided to shoot the film in Italy. Greece is so gray.

When I went there, I took many photographs for possible locations, but there was so little restoration outside of the Parthenon. So we decided to shoot in Italy.

We were going to shoot it in Yugoslavia — I explored Yugoslavia looking for locations, and we almost shot *Jason* there, then we had difficulties. They were trying to put a lot of things in our budget that they would later use for hotel sites and things. We blew our top, and we fled the last month to Italy, because we couldn't afford that type of hogwash.

You were filming Jason in Italy during the peblum cycle, in the midst of the popular Hercules films and so on—

Unfortunately—and *Cleopatra* (1963). We ran into awful problems. *Cleopatra* would hire an actor in England, send his whole family all the way to Italy for six months, and he'd have maybe two lines to say six months later! Everybody's salaries in Italy went up, and I think that's what priced Italy out of business.

Cleopatra was paying fantastic prices, they would rewrite the script on the set while everyone sat around, reading newspapers and waiting for something to do. You just can't make pictures that way today, economically. Every time we tried to hire an actor for *Jason*, they wanted *Cleopatra* salaries! We couldn't afford that.

It must have also been frustrating for you when Jason was released, only to suffer from the association with the low-budget Italian peblum fantasies.

[People did] associate *Jason* with *Hercules* (1958) and the "muscle" pictures, which it wasn't. But in the minds of the public, the minds of the critics, they thought that having been made in Italy, it was a "spaghetti" mythology, which it wasn't. It ended up doing quite well, eventually it made its money back, but it was harmed by the association with *Hercules Unchained* (1959) and those types of pictures.

Were there any of the Italian mythological films that you saw that you enjoyed or appreciated?

Amazing but true! The same man who directed *Attack of the 50 Foot Woman* also directed *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad!* (Stephen R. Bissette collection)

Well, there are a few hours of entertainment there, if you don't take them seriously. They talk about all the mythical characters like Talos, but you never see it on the screen. Again, that was always my aim — to put these things on the screen that the average picture would talk about, but you would never see.

You worked with Nathan Juran as a director more than any other, beginning with 20 Million Miles to Earth and The 7th Voyage of Sinbad.

He was, again, an art director in his early days. He became a director later. He went under several names —

Yes, it's hard to equate the man who did Attack of the 50 Foot Woman that same year with The 7th Voyage of Sinbad.

Ah, yes, "Nathan Hertz"! No, he did his best job on *First Men "In" The Moon* (1964). Jerry understood my problems.

These are not director's pictures in the European sense of the word, the *auteurs*. I tried to emphasize that. We laid the whole thing out beforehand. Many times I made drawings because you have to choose subjects which are suitable for this medium. You don't want to compete with the cartoon, you don't want to compete with the horror film, so we had to choose our stories very carefully to be sure they were suitable to the medium of animation.

In the 1950s it was very popular to have the monster-on-the-loose type of story, and I wanted to get away from that, and I finally came across the Sinbad stories. Understand that most of these stories were developed for their visuals' sake, because they are visual pictures. They are not story pictures per se, like John Steinbeck would write, nor were they directors' pictures.

The very fact that these pictures have to be laid out so carefully in order to make them for a reasonable budget — that's how we had our longevity. Charles took care of the live action, and I took care of minimizing all expenses by carefully planning. We always took anywhere from four to six months planning the pictures before we would dare go on the set.

I've had producers call me, saying, "next week we're going to start shooting this picture, would you come over and work out the special effects for us?" You just can't believe how naive some of these people who have been in the business for so long can be. We planned our pictures very carefully so there would be no excess of footage on the cutting room floor.

I agree with you about First Men "In" The Moon, I think it's Juran's best film. In your studio, you showed me a model of one of your proposed designs for the Selenites

The epic nature of Cooper's *She* can be seen in this scene from the now-rare film.

in that film. It was very strange and wonderful, with multi-colored eyes like a horsefly — really quite unsettling!

Yes, we were going to make them extremely different. They got too grotesque. It's always been my theory if you go too far, you lose your audience.

I thought *Jack the Giant Killer* (1962) did that, they went too far into the grotesque — they just become rubber dolls you feel no association with. So you have to be very careful in designing these things. Take the Centaur, for example, where you're dealing with two different creatures, a human and a horse — if you go too extreme... That's the reason we made the two-headed dog in *Clash of the Titans* (1981): we never made a three-headed dog because that would have made the body so grotesque it would lose believability. So one has to restrict one's imagination. That's my theory, anyway, and it seemed to work. You lose your audience by going overboard in grossness.

When I saw Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), I felt they did that — obviously, I'm wrong because it's a big success, but I felt the Beast was too grotesque. As a leading character, it was much too grotesque for my liking.

Given that, I imagine you didn't care for the extremes some of your contemporaries in the Fifties went to in films like Fiend Without a Face (1958), with the ambulatory brains and spinal columns created with model animation.

I've never seen that one. What was it?

Richard Gordon produced it. The last ten minutes features some very grotesque and quite gory dimensional animation done in Germany —

You mean Bert Gordon.

No, no, Richard Gordon produced it in England —

I never heard of it! I'll have to see that. (Note: We have since mailed a copy to Mr. Harryhausen.)

Were there any animation sequences you had completed that were cut from your films?

Occasionally, but minimal, absolutely minimal. There were small things in the skeleton fight in Jason, when the skeleton got his head cut off, I made a scene where he's on his hands and knees looking for his head. It slowed the whole action down, so we cut it out. But there weren't many scenes like that.

We cut out big sequences which were never shot in One Million Years B.C. (1966). The climax was going to have the invasion of the cave people by a brontosaurus. We decided to cut that out because of the length of time it would take to animate it. We'd only shot one scene, then we decided to rewrite the script. Michael Carreras rewrote the ending.

So the volcano and earthquake —

No, we always had that in there. We switched it around so there was no brontosaurus; the invasion by the Rock people took its place, which was effective with the dynamic earthquake. I had to put a very impressive earthquake on the screen with very little money.

That sequence, along with others in Mysterious Island (1961) and Clash of the Titans, echo the effects O'Brien created for The Last Days of Pompeii (1935), which is a sadly neglected film.

Oh, yes, that had impressed me quite a bit. Of course, Merian Cooper's *She* (1935) also impressed me enormously, you can see that in *First Men "In" The Moon*: massive doors opening, the huge staircases. A lot of people don't catch that. All the things you see growing up leave an impression, and *She* is one of my favorite of the films Cooper made. Not that one *copies* it, but the influence of the spectacle — Cooper didn't think much of it, but I think it's one of his better pictures! Cooper always claimed he went to Europe while it was being made, it was mostly Irving Pichel's film.

Helen Gahagen was, I thought, the perfect She: She wasn't supposed to be a sex symbol, as it was later portrayed by Ursula Andress in the Hammer version. That wasn't the point of *She*, which is a very serious story about reincarnation, though a lot of people dismiss it. It wasn't a popular picture by any means, but I thought it was beautifully made, and the

Max Steiner score always haunted me. I think it's one of his greatest scores, though of course *King Kong* (1933) is magnificent.

Did you ever hope to work with Steiner?

When we sold *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms* to Warner Brothers, I thought for one happy brief moment that Steiner might rescore it, because they didn't like the score that was done for $5,000; it was a dreadful score. It didn't do anything for the picture. Warner, when they bought the film outright, rescored it, but unfortunately Steiner was a first class musician and they wouldn't burden him with this film they'd just bought. . . I had hoped Steiner would score it, but he didn't. (David) Buttolph did a competent score, but it slowed the picture down, it made it too lumbering. I would have loved to have had a Steiner score.

You did have the good fortune to work with Bernard Herrmann quite often. Do you remember when you first met him?

Yes. I remembered him from the Mercury Theatre (radio show), his music just fit our type of picture. (I first met him) on The 7*th Voyage of Sinbad.*

We had a screening — we had done the picture on a very tight shoestring, and we couldn't afford color dailies. All our dailies were in black and white. Of course, half of the picture was missing, too. We had to leave the composition as I'd designed it for the monster(s) to be put in at certain places, so many scenes were missing. We were a little worried, because of Bernie's reputation for being rather outspoken if he didn't like something — we were a little leery, he had the reputation of saying, "why do you show me this garbage?", you know, and get up and walk out. But he didn't; he sat there, and seemed to think he could contribute something, which he certainly did.

We always got along very well, and I found him quite easy to work with, though a lot of people didn't.

The parting of ways with Herrmann must have been painful.

It was. There comes a point where you have problems. The music is the last thing to be recorded, so many times to survive you have to rob Peter to pay Paul. The music budget sometimes suffers. If you have an overage, many times that means cutting the size of the orchestra down, and Bernie, of course, wouldn't tolerate that, and he threw many tantrums about it. But such is life; that's how the cookie crumbles, as they say. But we stayed friends afterwards. We were friends for quite a few years.

Laurie Johnson was the first composer to take his place on your films.

Yes, Laurie Johnson did *First Men "In" The Moon*. It was very suitable to the film. It wasn't as distinctive as a Herrmann score, no score is, really.

I think *Clash of the Titans* had a superb score (by Laurence Rosenthal), but it didn't have the identity that Herrmann's scores seemed to; I don't know why. Miklos Rosza did a very good score (for *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*, 1974), but he suffered again from a thin orchestra because of the economics. I thought the score itself was good, and if it had been written for a bigger orchestra, I think it would have been much more impressive. There is a sense of majesty that is lost when you have to thin your orchestra.

Music is so important to these films — ever since Kong, I always felt music was 50% of the success of a film. Producers don't like to say that, because then they have to pay much more for the music.

It's interesting, though, how effective Mario Nascimbene's minimalist percussive score for One Million Years B.C. was.

It was suitable for that film. A lot of people didn't like it, but I thought it had that primitive ring to it. I thought it was most impressive. It's not a score you would go out humming in the lobby, though you might go out gru*nting* it! It was suitable for the subject matter, and I think anything other than that would have been like the original *One Million B.C.*, which had a melodic theme that was very unsuitable. I think Nascimbene's score had that wonderful primitive ring to it.

Don Chaffey directed that film, which was the first film you made without Charles Schneer since It Came From Beneath the Sea (1955). Did Hammer allow you the same freedom you had with Schneer?

Yes, I had all the freedom necessary. I had worked with Chaffey on *Jason and the Argonauts* before, and I recommended him. They asked me who would be best to direct this, I felt Don would. He was a local Englishman, which was ideal. It was Hammer's one hundredth anniversary (feature), and they were willing to put in a little more effort and money and imagination into it as opposed to their previous films.

You mentioned earlier the necessity of reworking the script on One Million Years B.C. late in the production. The screenplays you worked from seemed so tightly crafted, how often was it necessary to make such changes?

We always put a lot of work into the scripts. We had sweatbox sessions between the writer, Charles (Schneer) and myself, and then once the director came on, we'd make changes. A lot of thought went into the scripts that people really don't appreciate.

And you were always there from the start.

Oh, yes. Many times I initiated the stories.

Did that start with Earth Vs. The Flying Saucers?

It started way back with *Mighty Joe Young* (1949). I helped Obie. Obie was involved with the script; a lot of the material in *Mighty Joe* came from *Gwangi*, which he had started at RKO. The whole roping sequence, for instance. *Gwangi* had started at RKO, and featured the roping sequence with a dinosaur, and then when that collapsed and Obie got back in with Merian Cooper, they lifted the whole roping sequence out and put the gorilla there instead of *Gwangi*. A lot of people think that we swiped the roping sequence from

Mighty Joe Young, which we didn't!

You nursed Gwangi for years. You obviously carried it in your heart if nowhere else for a long while.

Ever since I'd seen Obie working on it... He had started it and put about a years work into it, and it was so sad to see it collapse. The war came along, and they cancelled it for some reason; I'm not sure why.

Obie, of course, was very disappointed, because it would have been a great film if it had come out at that time. He had matte glasses already painted by Jack Shaw that they would use in the production. A lot of preparations; he had each set-up in dimensional cardboard cutouts so you could see just how they would work, dioramas created purely for technical purposes, not to be used in the picture. When I saw his preparations for the roping sequence, I said, "My God, this is going to be great! Nothing like it since the wheel." I was so sad to see it collapse.

It all disappeared. Apparently RKO sold the script to some agent. Years later I found the script — Obie had given me a script of Gwa*ngi*, and when Charles and I were looking for a subject, we decided to try and resurrect it.

I'm curious about something. After the original production of Gwangi collapsed, and Mighty Joe was finished, O'Brien worked up a number of other projects proposals. Did you ever get to read scripts, or see any of the footage he and Pete Peterson had reportedly completed for some of those?

No, because I'd moved to Europe, and I had no contact with Obie for quite a while.

That is such an odd limbo in his career. You rarely see any evidence of the many projects that he tried to launch.

No, quite. I think they did a lot of it in Pete's garage. I'm not sure. I've seen some test since some of those things, but I never had any association with it. I lost touch with everybody.

Harryhausen would not only work on the story and script of his films, he also prepared detailed drawings to illustrate his ideas. This drawing was made to prepare for *Valley of Gwangi*. (Stephen R. Bissette collection)

May I ask why was O'Brien's name left off the script credits of your own production of The Valley of Gwangi (1969)?

His name had never been associated with the script that we bought. See, the script that was purchased never had Obie's name on it; it was by Harold Lamb. He wrote *Genghis Khan* (1965) and many other stories. They had hired him to do the script. . . but so much of it came from O'Brien. Apparently, Obie's name had never been registered in connection with the picture.

You hired William Bast to script The Valley of Gwangi.

Yes, William Bast, and then we got somebody else who did some additional work and didn't get credit for it.

With you doing so much plot and writing work, why did you never receive screenplay credits?

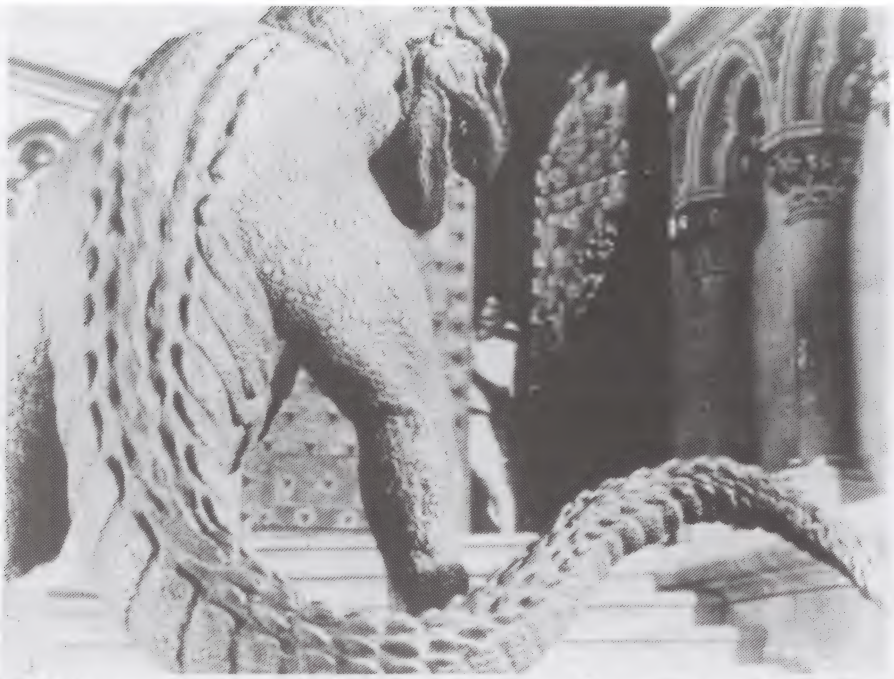
I never took credits. Even 20 Million *Miles to Earth* was purely my story, but I gave it to my friend Charlotte Knight, who developed it and wrote the treatment, so, I gave her full credit.

I don't know, I was a little naive in those days, not realizing that in Hollywood if you don't toot your own horn nobody else is going to toot it for you. I didn't want to see "Harryhausen" all over the screen. It was my natural timidity, shall we say? Which I *have* overcome, by the way. I just never bothered to claim credit for it, so I never got it.

I also noticed you'd worked with Jan Read a number of times.

Yes. He was basically a "script doctor." He was great at taking a finished script and seeing what was wrong with it, and there are many people like that. He was a creative writer, but his main forte was that he could analyze a script and correct many things. He worked on *Jason* and *First Men "In" The Moon*.

With Jason there's always been the dilemma that the hero is basically a thief. He's going to this kingdom far away and stealing their treasure. That must have been a problem in scripting that film.



Unlike so many other "monster" movies, Harryhausen's creations such as the Ymir or Gwangi (above) were real characters, not just a reason to have a hero. © Warner Bros. (Stephen R. Bissette collection)

And Sinbad was a pirate! It is tough when you're trying to make a hero out of these mythological characters, but then you have to justify it by making the opposition villainous, just like politicians do. There's no harm in that. It's interesting that you bring this up: in *Golden Voyage (of Sinbad)*, I got a letter from some woman who had analyzed the film (arguing) that Sinbad was the villain and Khoura was the hero! She made sense: she analyzed and broke down the separate sections, and by golly, why hadn't *we* thought of that! I thought, "What have we done!" Well, they were all pirates and adventurers, and everybody thinks they're right. The hero thinks *he's* right, and the villain thinks, "No, *I* want this, *I'm* right."

It's purely a theatrical device, the hero. But they're certainly not delineated in today's type of films. You seldom ever see a hero, you seldom ever see a gentleman on the screen anymore. People learn from films. I grew up trying to emulate Ronald Colman in some scenes from *Lost Horizon* (1937) and various other pictures; when you're growing up, it leaves an impression. I dread to think what kind of an impression *Basic Instinct* (1992) will leave on young people, or *Silence of the Lambs* (1991), which wins Academy Awards like mad!

Film is still a very potent thing. A handful of neurotic people in Hollywood dictate the morals of the world through the medium of television and film. I find it rather frightening; it's a moral vacuum, and they influence people around the world.

Is that why you chose to retire from filmmaking?

Part of it. I found the type of stories we wanted to tell were no longer fashionable, shall we say? One of the big thrills of getting fan letters from young people is that they feel our films inspired them, changed their lives. I'm glad they changed them for the better, not for the worse.

I've always been astounded by your ability as an artist to maintain such discipline. Given the incredible power of concentration necessary to complete your animation — how did you manage that with a day-to-day life?

It wasn't easy! That's why I preferred to work alone so much. If I have many people around me, they're always bound to ask questions, or you're distracted; you ask them the time or something, and you forget what you're doing. So I got into the habit of working by myself.

I had to accumulate an enormous amount of knowledge of different aspects of making films, such as casting and mixing rubber and sculpting and machine work, for putting armatures together, so one had to accumulate a great deal of knowledge. I had a great curiosity all of my life, for which I'm very grateful. It required a great many different experiences. You had to know film editing, for one thing, so you'd know how far you can go when you shoot a scene, and not shoot a lot of excess footage that would probably end up on the cutting room floor.

Investing so much of yourself into your creations — your characters and models — did they ever overlap into your dreams?

No, not in that respect, no. It was a profession to me.

It was a fetish; it wasn't an eight-hour-a-day job, it was something you had to live with night and day. Naturally, you can't have a family life when you're trying to put your foot in the door, so to speak, so I didn't marry until much later in life because I couldn't devote my time to the family and do this type of work at the same time, it was just too consuming.

The last "character" film you made in the style of King Kong, wherein the primary antagonist was animated, was Gwangi.

That's right.

Were there stories or characters you wanted to do after that which would have followed suit?

There were a few, yes, a number I would have liked to have done, but you can't keep repeating the same patterns. We tried to vary it. When we went into Arabic mythology, it became more episodic. We tried to create with the Humunculus in Gol*den Voyage* a character that went through more than just a sequence, an incident, which was *copied* later — we

won't go into that, they called it a tribute, which is acceptable.

There are so many images of humunculi in your films, especially in the Sinbad pictures. Did you ever feel there was something alchemical about what you were doing, instilling motion — not life as we live it — into these creatures?

It is. That always fascinated me. I don't know whether you'd call that a Frankenstein complex or a God complex (laughs), but the fascination of trying to create life on the screen of something that's not there — it's never been recognized as an art, but I think eventually it will be considered an art.

You're starting from *nothing*, and putting on the screen an image that assumes a life of its own, even though it's a fantasy image. I've always been interested in metaphysics and alchemy.

Harryhausen's sucess with *One Million Years B.C.* sparked a mini-cycle within fantasy films which included movies such as *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth*. © 20th Century Fox (Stephen R. Bissette collection)

Peracelsus was a very fascinating character to me, he was supposed to have made the perfect humunculous. He was a Swiss philosopher and alchemist in the medieval days, the 14th or 15th Century, one of the early experimenters in mysticism and magic. He was supposed to have knowledge of turning lead into gold and alchemy.

A lot of times it was symbolical. I like to read it in a different way, as actuality, because it's visual, and a lot of these concepts you'll find in our films.

Madame Loblotski always fascinated me. She was a rather unusual woman in the Victorian period, who was supposed to have a great knowledge of philosophy and mystical subjects. She wrote several books. Isis Unveiled and others on mystical subjects which a lot of people pooh-poohed, but there's some interesting information in those books.

Another primary fascination in your life, in terms of breathing life into long inanimate objects, has been the reanimation of dinosaurs. We've talked about Gustave Dore's influence, but what about Charles Knight's influence on your work?

Oh, yes — on all of us! He was an influence on Willis O'Brien, he was on me, and a whole raft of wonderful artists who have come today. He was the only one that had dramatic and interesting restorations of prehistoric animals.

After Knight, did the work of artists similarly dedicated to the restoration of prehistoric life such as Rudolph Zallinger or Zdenak Burian have any impact on your work?

No, Burian came much later, of course: most of my influence was from Charles Knight. I had the great pleasure of speaking to him on the telephone when I was in New York, but I never actually met him.

Did you ever spend time studying the science of paleontology?

Not the science, no. It was an interest I read on my own, and of course I loved the museums, to see the restorations and the skeletons.

Every young kid, I think, is interested. My dad used to take me to the La Brea Tar Pits, which presented the prehistoric mammal period. Charles Knight had a wonderful mural in the Los Angeles museum, a restoration of the whole La Brea Tar Pit, with the vultures and the saber-toothed tigers. I used to go down there and study that for hours on end. But they didn't have many dinosaurs there, so I had to get my knowledge from the books about the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

Current theories from paleontologists like Robert Bakker propose that dinosaurs were warm-blooded creatures. There was an article in this week's New York Times about fossil bone marrow analysis that seems to bear out Bakker's theories. It's interesting in relation to your work, because it seems to verify the image of the dinosaurs your films presented, where they are very active, and quick. Do you feel a certain vindication in this?

I was ahead of my time? (laughs) Not necessarily, not consciously, maybe subconsciously. We'd do it for theatrical purposes, we tried to make our animals as accurate as possible as far was what was known.

Now, all of a sudden, after all these years they discover the Brontosaurus's head was not a Brontosaurus head, but some

other species' head — I don't know how they made that mistake — and I think one day they'll find out that the human creature, the homo sapien, lived much closer to the age of the dinosaurs than we believe today. They keep pushing man's origins back. It wasn't a short while ago, we thought that it was maybe five thousand years that man first developed, then ten thousand, and now it's over a million years ago. So there's no reason to assume that eventually you won't find that man goes back even further — then we can vindicate *One Million Years B.C.*! (laughs)

Yes, you've taken a lot of lumps for that one!

Well, what have you got if you don't put humans in relationship to the dinosaurs? You'd have no drama. There's several people who made films like that, and they're documentaries — that's not what we were making. We were making theatrical "what if" type of pictures, you know, with imagination. You can't just stick to the scientific facts, there's no point to it unless you're making a documentary.

A recent hybrid of the theatrical interest you mentioned and your art—not animation per se—are these "Dinomation" museum exhibits.

Yes, they "copped" our name.

Have you been involved on any of these in any way? Do you enjoy them?

I saw them in Utah for the first time, and the museums in London had them for six months. They're most interesting. I wanted to do that years ago, but never got involved in it. I think the dinosaurs are the most fascinating things to any young person — well, any old person, for that matter.

The World's Fair exhibits pre-dated what we have today. Did you ever get to see those exhibitions?

No — in 1933 they had full-sized restorations. Don Glut and a number of people have several of those things. Sinclair Oil Company did a lot of wonderful restorations of dinosaurs years ago that I was very happy with.

I imagine living in England that you've spent time in the first dinosaur park restorations ever, in Crystal Palace.

Yes, that was before the science of paleontology had taken shape, and those dinosaurs are not reconstructed in the proper way. But they're a part of history, and interesting.

Given the current popular interest in paleontology, do you think in your lifetime

The success of the dinosaur segment in *Fantasia* discouraged a young Ray Harryhausen from completing his own dinosaur project. © Walt Disney Company (Stephen R. Bissette collection)

you'll see anyone try a theatrical feature similar to what you had begun work on with Evolution?

Probably. Disney did it, of course — that's why I stopped mine, *Fantasia* (1940) came out. The dinosaur sequence in that was the same thing I was doing, only I was doing it in three dimensions. I wanted to do it to music like that; I didn't necessarily have Stravinsky in mind, but it certainly worked beautifully for *Fantasia*.

I got discouraged, so I quit, but at least I had all the footage as a sample of what I could do. Maybe someone will attempt it. I don't know.

Did you see Phil Tippett's animation for the television special Dinosaur! (1988)?

I saw some of it, not all of it. Phil does some marvelous work.

I saw some tests he did for *Jurassic Park*, Steven Spielberg showed me some, and I thought they were most impressive. Animated models of an allosaurus, and then some computer animation as well —

Was that effective?

The computer animation was most effective. I think Spielberg is going to use a lot of it. It's an exciting story — I love the story, very logical. I wish we'd thought of it *years* ago!

Have you seen the work of some of the current fantasy artists, like James Gurney's Dinotopia volume (Turner Publishing Inc., 1992)?

Oh, yes, that was beautiful. They're very good drawings; the little details of people hanging on the neck of the Brontosaurus, watering the plants on poles. . . my wife and I bought three of his prints and the book here (at the San Diego Comics Convention). They're very good, the lithographs, wonderful color, beautifully painted; the dinosaurs are exquisite. Made me want to get back and put things on the screen like that!

Do you ever get that urge?

(above) One of Willis O'Brien's concepts was to match his Frankenstein monster against a giant gorilla as seen in this production sketch. (Below) Years later, the Japanese production of *King Kong Vs. Godzilla* corrupted O'Brien's vision. (Stephen R. Bissette collection)

Occasionally. I try to block it out of my mind! When I think of how much work goes into preparing a film. . .

Were there any projects you had wanted to pursue after Clash of the Titans, before you announced your retirement from the industry?

There were a few, yes. We were going

to do Force *of the Trojans*. That was prepared, but it never got off the ground. It wasn't a sequel to *Clash*, it was about Icarus and different phases of Greek mythology. Everyone felt we needed more violent films, and so it was very difficult to get backing despite the fact that *Clash* was such a big hit. MGM made a lot of money off of *Clash*. But you know, they change management like you change diapers, and sometimes just for the same reason! I shouldn't say that. (laughs)

Your home is full of beautiful sculptures and artistic renditions of beings and creatures of mythology, from the Greek and Arabic lore you did put to film to Balinese and other exotic cultures that would be unfamiliar to most audiences. Were there other mythologies you wanted to bring to the screen?

Yes, a few, one or two. We tried to mix the myths. Many people wanted us to do Norse mythology, but it's not as romantic as the Arabic or Greek mythology, for some reason.

Somebody wanted us to do the Tolkien stories, The Lord of the Rings, but that's not really a medium for animation; I think it's more appropriate to the cartoon. The Hobbit came up one time, and I started reading it, but I just didn't feel it was suitable for our medium.

Were there any that did reach the stage of development where you had done drawings?

Well, I would have liked to have done *Frankenstein*, remake *Frankenstein* as Obie wanted to do after *King Kong* — no, I'm sorry, it was after *The Lost World* (1925). He wanted to do *Frankenstein* long before Boris Karloff did it, as an animated model rather than a live actor, which I think would have been quite suitable.

I never did any drawings, but I thought of it several times. *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) was so beautifully done, I didn't think I could compete with James Whale. It's still one of the best *Frankenstein* films, there are wonderful qualities in it that just don't exist in today's type of film. Characters like Ernest Thesiger, and you know, Colin Clive — you don't breed actors like that any more.

It's too early to tell now, but perhaps Jurassic Park will take the medium to a wider audience, building upon the broad canvas you created while building upon O'Brien's work. Audiences today seem more willing to accept dimensional model animation as part of a theatrical narrative, which seems to me the result of what your persistence conditioned audiences to accept ....

King Kong more or less conditioned audiences to accept that.

But it wasn't consistent until you were doing your work, a film every two or three years for two and a half decades.

We bridged the gap from where O'Brien left off and Spielberg began. Nobody had done much in between.

Are you familiar with the work of more recent dimensional animators, like Jan Svankmajer or the Brothers Quay?

I've seen those, the Quay Brothers, yes. They're all very good, a lot of them are most effective.

Have you been able to keep up with the field as a viewer?

I've just seen bits and pieces, I've never been able to see features or anything of that nature.

There's a broader context to the model animation used in the Star Wars movies and films I can't imagine you're enamored of — like The Evil Dead trilogy, the Nightmare on Elm Street, Robocop and Terminator films — which use a lot of dimensional animation.

No, I don't care for those.

Have you seen any recent films you did find worthwhile?

We don't go to films much anymore. We've been disappointed and horrified so much — they're too gruesome for me. All these wonderful so-called "special effect films", they're all based on negative subjects. Technically, they're brilliant, but people don't go to films just to see technical brilliance.

I believe you've got to have a story that's at least uplifting, and not always depressing. We used to see horror films when I was a kid, *Dracula* (1930) and *Frankenstein* (1931), but then you'd go see *Lost Horizon*; there was a balance there. Now you don't have this balance.

Ironically, now that audiences are so accepting of model animation, the kind of film you and Charles Schneer used to make doesn't exist any more.

It doesn't, because we used dimensional animation to create our leading characters, like Obie did. *King Kong* went right through the picture as the leading antagonist, and we tried to do that. We sometimes had three or four leading antagonists, but the Ymir is an example where one of your leading characters is sympathetic.

Here you have Kong — the name *King Kong* is better known than many of the actors of that period. King Kong is always associated with the legends of Hollywood, as well as Greta Garbo, Clark Gable, Marlene Deitrich — he's up there, and he was just a bloody dummy! Rabbit fur on a metal armature! But his personality has lasted, and he's a legend in Hollywood, just like those wonderful stars from that period.

They were almost iconic.

Yes, they were so distinctive, wonderful characters. You go back to those films that were made in the system of producing pictures at that time, the studio system — you don't find a Dietrich or a Garbo today, they don't breed people like that any more.

They were synthetic, composites of various things the studio wanted to push onto the public to create the stories they did at that time. They were condemned many

Continued on page 60

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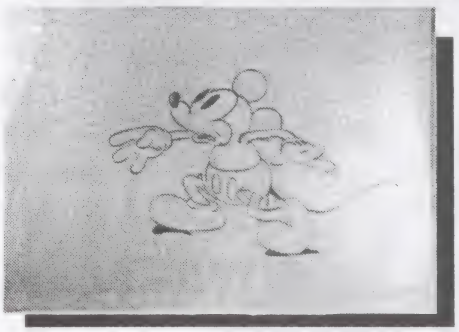

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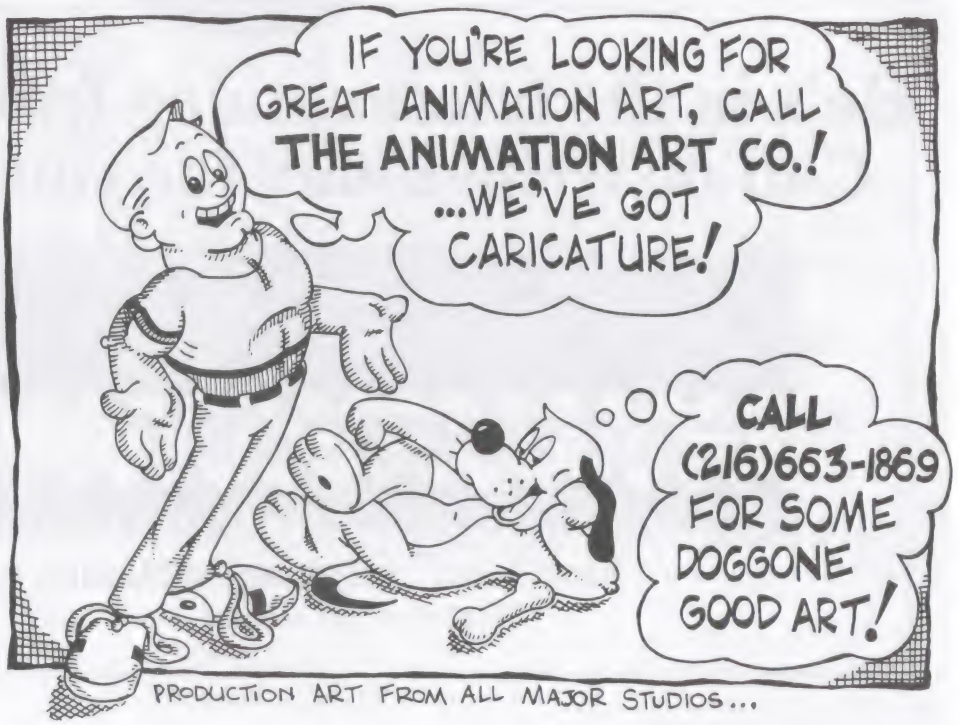
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Issue 22: Featuring coverage on *Beauty and The Beast*!
Issue 23: *Sold Out!*
Issue 24: Ray Harryhausen interviews, Bill Plympton profile, Thirties Pre-Code Animation

Popeye Quiz Answers

From Page 40

1. Olive Oyl
2. Olive's brother
3. Popeye
4. Chicago
5. Motion Picture Operator
6. Eugene the Jeep. Popeye also appeared with Bernice the magical Wiffle Hen
7. Wellington J. Wimpy
8. Betty Boop
9. William Costello as "Red Pepper Sam"
10. William Costello, then Jack Mercer
11. Mae Questel, also the voice of Betty Boop.
12. Sammy Lerner
13. *Popeye the Sailor* (1933). The first official Popeye cartoon was *I Yam What I Yam.*
14. "Hey there, are you a sailor?"
15. Poopdeck Pappy
16. Pipeye, Pupeye, Peepeye and Poopeye
17. Wimpy
18. "Cuz I eats me spinach."
19. The Sea Hag
20. Brutus
21. Robin Williams
22. Shelly Duvall
23. It's in 3-D
24. *A Clean Shaven Man*
25. Olive and Wimpy
26. "Open sez me."
27. the corner of Chow and Main
28. "What Can I do for You."
29. Spinach
30. Quaker Oats. The Quakers, a nonviolent religious group, objected to such a pugnacious pitchman, and the ads were withdrawn.

Gord Wilson is a Northwest-based writer, and is the author of two cartoon trivia books. His quizzes will be a regular feature in future issues of ANIMATO!

ASK ANIMATO

From Page 4

"How do pronounce ANIMATO! ? Is is "Ani-may-toe" or "Ani-mah-toe?" -D.Q., Virginia

If you subscribe for two years or more, you can pronounce it any way you damn well please. If you have to settle a bet, it's pronounced "Ani-mah-toe."

"I know that cartoon characters aren't real, but I am offended and embarrassed when I see Porky Pig without pants. Mickey Mouse always wears pants. Why does Warner Brothers allow this fleshy hog to run wild?" - S.D., Monson, MA

Many animation experts believe cartoon characters were designed with minimal clothing to facilitate and simplify drawings. In the case of Porky Pig, insiders at Warner Brothers claim Leon Schlesinger never wore pants while sitting behind his desk. The porcine star was simply an extension of Leon's persona.

"Jonny Quest was my all-time favorite! How could you kill off Jonny and Bandit for the sake of a cheap laugh?" - S.R.B., Marlboro, VT

Easy now. You are confusing "Johnny Quest" with "Jonny Quest." Sure, they both happen to have a dog named "Bandit" and a friend named "Hadji." Look back on page 51 of issue 24. The title clearly shows an "h" in the character's first name. So as you can sees, there really is no similarity.

Send your questions, real or bogus, to ASK ANIMATO!, 17 Spruce St. Springfield, MA 01105.

POPEYE VIDEO

From Page 39

Baba are washed out, and appear to be old television prints as their opening credits are incomplete. Their print of *Sinbad* is quite acceptable, though.

The day the Turner organization elects to capitalize on one of its greatest assets, the original black and white Fleischer Popeye cartoons, will be a boon to all animation fans. Until then, though, the best representation of the series I've seen is the new compilation from Snappy Video.

HARRYHAUSEN

From page 56

times for it, but I don't see why they should be condemned: they produced these mythic creatures called Dietrich, Garbo and Gable. They weren't *real* people, they were bigger than life — they were wonderful, just as King Kong was bigger than life.

Just as Kong needed O'Brien, Dietrich needed Josef Sternberg — another kind of alchemy.

Yes, that's it!

Stephen R. Bissette will be contributing a regular column on model animation for ANIMATO!. He has just finished an interview book (with Stanley Wiater) The Comic Book Rebels, and his new comic book series,*1963*, from Image Comics is now on sale.

DARKWING DUCK
From Page 43

discover his own double life as Darkwing Duck. Ham String: Jerry Houser; Prina Lott: Teresa Ganzel

Mutancy on the Bounty: Darkwing quickly discovers that he isn't the only hero in town...And he's about the only person in all of St. Canard who doesn't have mutant powers.

Malice's Restaurant: Darkwing winces when Morgana opens a ghoulish cafe and arranges for an appearance by the Cute Fuzzy Bunnies to offset her dark decor. However, this only serves to attract Negaduck, who plans to brainwash the bunnies for his own evil plans. Event of note: In this episode, the Muddlefoot family is introduced to Morgana, who is openly Drake Mallard's girlfriend.

Extinct Possibility: When a scientist finds Darkwing's body encased in amber, Darkwing, Launchpad and Gosalyn go back in time to find out why and encounter a society of backwards thinking dinosaurs. Johnny T. Rex: Dan Castellanta

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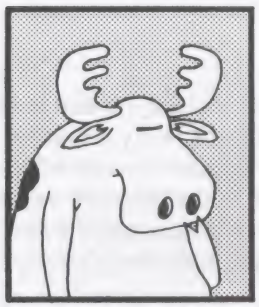
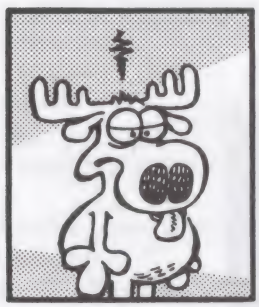


GARY LARSON
"the Far Side"

CHARLES SCHULZ
"Peanuts"

MATT GROENING
"Life in Hell"

THEODOR GEISEL
Dr. Seuss



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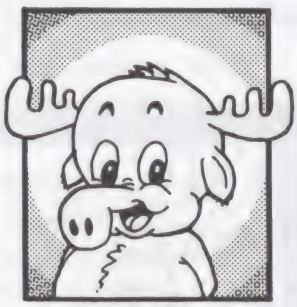
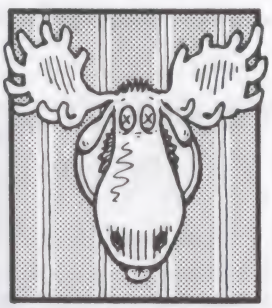
"Mother Goose & Grimm"

DON MARTIN
Mad / Cracked



CHUCK JONES
cartoon director



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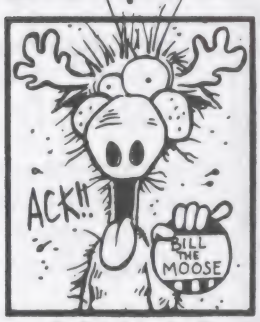


B. BREATHED
"Bloom County"

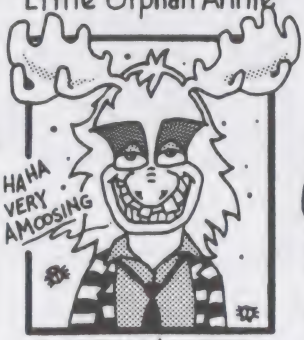
F. GOTTFREDSON
"Mickey Mouse"

HAROLD GRAY
"Little Orphan Annie"

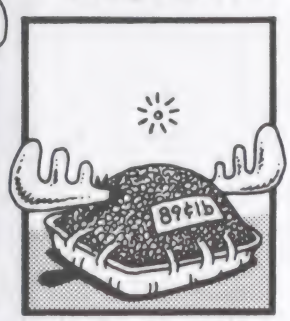
B. WATTERSON
"Calvin & Hobbes"

WALT KELLY
"Pogo"

PARKER/HART
"Wizard of Id"



BURTON/GEFFEN
"Beetlejuice"



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From The Inkwell

In 1977, I approached Richard and Ruth Fleischer about writing an authorized biography of their father, Max. I had always been a Popeye fan, and discovered his studio's other cartoons while in college. After a bit of negotiation, Richard consented, and since then the Fleischer Studio has loomed large in my career. My book proposals have bounced around a number of publishers, several of whom gave me an oral agreement (perhaps I should contact those lawyers who recently squeezed several million out of Kim Basinger!). So far, though, there have been no written offers, a condition which I hope to rectify this year.

While attempting to sell the proposal I've continued working on the project, and the research work has been a joy. I've hunched over a movieola at the Library of Congress watching Ko-Ko cartoons which hadn't been screened in decades, retrieved material from the bowels of the Lincoln Center collection in New York, and watched DC Comics' own prints of the Superman cartoons with appreciative artist and writers.

The best experiences have been with the people who made those cartoons. Over the years, in my career as a print journalist and radio talk show host I've had the chance of meeting dozens of people in the entertainment industry. Many of them have been people I've admired, and there is nothing quite like the feeling of finding out someone whose work you've enjoyed is actually as wonderful as you hoped. Jack Mercer was one of those people for me. He and his wife were very patient, and gracious, and when he passed away, I truly felt a loss. My interview with him is published here for the first time.

ANIMATO! is honored to have assembled so many fine writers for our Popeye tribute. Jim Korkis is one of animation's best known historians, and Fred Grandinetti is undoubtedly Popeye's biggest fan. You'll be reading more of Eric Walker's work in future issues of ANIMATO!

You'll notice that Steve's Bissette's column, *From Gertie to Gwangi*, begins this issue and we have the second installment of his interview with Ray Harryhausen. Judith Reboy's coverage of *Darkwing Duck* continues our coverage of the television animated scene. Her husband has interviewed Savage Steve Holland, creator of *Eek the Cat*, for our summer issue. We welcome back Matthew Hasson to *Toons on Tape*, and hope one day to present Thelma Scumm's column again.

Speaking of our summer issue, we'll be featuring a great piece by Christopher Kindred on the animated *Batman* series and that aforementioned interview with Savage Steve Holland by Joe Reboy. If you've got ideas for a piece for the magazine, drop me a line. We're looking for book reviews, tape reviews, comments on collectibles and contributions to our *Toon Cartoon* section.

One issue which is key to the editorial viewpoint of this magazine is creators' rights. ANIMATO! does not own any of the material it prints. The copyright is held by the creators, and the package itself is the only aspect of the magazine Pat and I copyright.

The creators' rights issue has been a key development in the comic book industry in the last few years, but it hasn't reached the animation industry to the same degree. Talk to veteran animators who developed characters for studios, and find out what their cut was of the merchandising money generated by that character.

Karl Cohen of the San Francisco chapter of ASIFA pointed out in that organization's recent newsletter the questions of ownership left unaddressed by a contest sponsored by The Cartoon Network, *Animation* magazine and Hanna Barbera. Karl believes the entry rules for this storyboard contest may not fully explain just what a creator is giving up by entering his or her work in this competition

ANIMATO! certainly understands the dynamics and complexities of producing animated television series, but the rights of the person or group responsible for the creation of a character and format should be crystal clear. Simply put, if you made it, you should benefit from it.

I just believe everyone can be better served if creators retain rights over their properties. Generally, the original artists and writers can produce material, whether it's comics or cartoons, that is far superior to the work of non-creators. And better work can translate into wider acceptance and more profit for everyone.

By the way, I personally criticize no one for coming up with an idea and selling it to a company, if that is their decision. Perhaps, that's why I've not shed many tears over the *Ren and Stimpy* situation.

Mike

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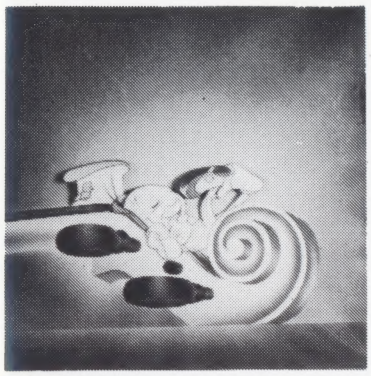
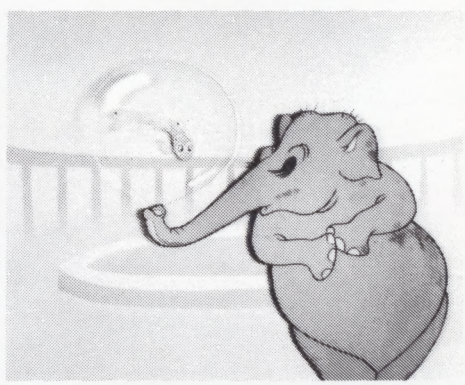
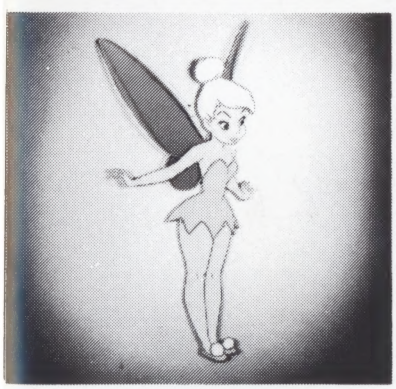
VINTAGE ANIMATION ART



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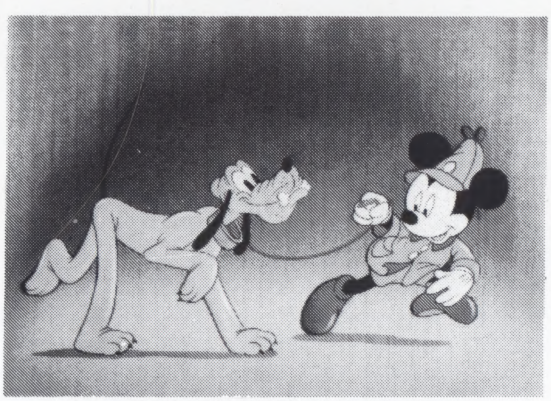

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